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MEDIEVAL MACEDONIA

THE SECOND MACEDONIAN EMPIRE
of
TSAR SAMOIL

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MACEDONIACOSMOPOLITANA
2017

The intention of this study is to provide a simple and easy-to-understand retrospective of the periods from medieval Macedonian, Russian, and Eastern Romeian empires history, religion, and culture. It avoids substantial and detailed explanations that consider wider historical background of the events and persons described below, and is written primarily for those approaching the topic for the first time.

It also avoids complex explanatory comments or insightful footnotes on the citations from the sources. The explanatory notes are prevalently etymological.

The time-frame of this essay ranges from the rule of Jovan Tzimiskes until the end of the rule of Tsar Samoil. The interpretations given here are meant to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the Macedonian and Romeian empires that were the superpowers of the medieval world. They are focused mainly on the Macedonian aspect of the story disregarding the wider historical or socio-political perspective.

All the dates and references to centuries are „AD“ except where indicated otherwise. Throughout this essay, Macedonia/Macedonians refer to the area of the mainland north of Mount Olymp. Macedonian Peninsula refers to so-called '*Balkans.*'

Latinized/Anglicized or Macedonic names are given in parenthesis, some names and technical terms are transliterated and these will be obvious when they appear. Other technical terms and titles (e.g. *Romeo, Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma* etc.) have been transliterated directly from their original forms with as few changes as possible: thus *Samoil* rather than '*Samuel*', which is neither Macedonic nor correct.

The terminology and concepts that are *post factum* inventions (like '*Balkans*' or '*Byzantium*') are largelly ignored, if not altogether avoided. Such empirically wrong terms used by modern historiography were unknown to the medieval world and their continued use perpetuates misleading assumptions.

The modern-historiography 'privileged moments' are largely avoided too. For historians today one such a privileged moment (of places and monuments as '*Byzantine*') is '*Byzantine Empire*', actually the Romeian Empire of the 5^{th} and 6^{th} centuries. But when and why is it so regarded? Was the '*Byzantine Empire*' regarded as '*Byzantine*' already in the Middle Ages? By whom?

The definitions, current meanings and related concepts of the words in English are taken from the Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus (Mac OsX version 1.0.2 for PowerPC) and/or Meriam-Webster online dictionary. For the words in Macedonian are used the online ENCYCLOPÆDIA MACEDONICA / MAKEDONSKA ENCIKLOPEDIJA vol. 1 & 2, and off.net online Macedonian dictionary.

The sources are listed in the References at the end of this essay.

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Prologue: In the Great Russian Orthodox Encyclopedia we read: "*В 963 году в Македоний произошло восстание, окончившееся изгнанием болгар и основанием собственного государства*," – translated from Russian: „*In the year of 963 in Macedonia happened un uprising, which ended with expulsion of the Bulgars and founding of an independent kingdom*." [1]

Although the uprising in Macedonia started much earlier, AD 969 is the factual year recognized by the conventional historiography as the date when the new Macedonian tzardom was founded and officialized. But, the strugle for freedom of the medieval Macedonian nation actually began much earlier. It was ignitted by local Macedonian governors, called the *Comitopuli*, i.e. '*Comes'* or '*Comites*' (Lat. *Commissarius*, i.e. '*Count*' in plain English)[2], of a noble Macedonian family led by four brothers named David, Moses, Aron, and Samoil. The movement was regarded as a internal "revolt" by the Romeian emperor. In that moment the undisputed major power in the region was the medieval Romeian Empire, under the rule of emperors from the Macedonian Dynasty.[3] It was at its height, and in the late 9th, 10th, and early 11th centuries it regained control over the Adriatic Sea, southern Italy, Asia Minor, and was in possession of the whole Macedonian Peninsula (the "*Balkans*" as of 19th century).[4] And although the empire was significantly smaller than during the reign of Justinian I the

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[1] 'Энциклопедический Словарь' Ф.А.Брокгауза и И.А.Ефрона, [М] - Македония https://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/all/063/63277.shtml

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comes_sacrarum_largitionum

[3] Basil I the Macedonian (811-886) was a Romeian emperor who reigned from 867 to 886. Born a simple peasant in the Romeian theme of Macedonia, he rose in the Imperial court, and usurped the Imperial throne from emperor Michael III (842–867). Despite his humble origins, he showed great ability in running the affairs of state, leading to a revival of Imperial power and a renaissance of Romeian art. He was perceived by the Romeians as one of their greatest emperors, and the Macedonian dynasty, which he founded, ruled over what is regarded as the most glorious and prosperous era of the Romeian Empire.

Basil's family ruled for 194 years. The Macedonian period is seen as the golden age of the Byzantine Empire. Culturally, the age is referred to as the Macedonian Renaissance; art, literature, and architecture flourished. In the realm of politics Romeian Empire lost its last holdings in Sicily, but in the course of the 10th and early 11th centuries built up a commanding position in southern Italy, recovered Crete and Cyprus, pushed the eastern boundary deep in Armenia, recovered Cilicia and large areas of northern Syria and Mesopotamia, and conquered the Bulgar Empire, restoring the Danube frontier for the first time since the seventh century. Basil II, Basil I's great-great grandson, ruled an empire that was the undisputed superpower of the day. See "The Forgotten Renaissance: The Successes of the Macedonian Dynasty" http://www.ancient-origins.net/history-important-events/forgotten-renaissance-successes-macedonian-dynasty-003227;
see also: https://www.historyofmacedonia.org/RomanMacedonia/MacedonianDynasty.htm

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire_under_the_Macedonian_dynasty

Great, it was rather stronger, as the remaining territories were less geographically dispersed and more politically and culturally integrated. The cities of the empire expanded, and affluence spread across the provinces because of the new-found security

and military might. It is also known as the period of the 'Macedonian Renaissance'.[5] Nevertheless, the autochthonous Macedonian population never ceased to fight for their long time ago lost sovereignty and freedom. Romeian empire was always seen as foreign invader by the Macedonians, despite the large number of their compatriots who were forcibly assimilated, latinized, and even became emperors of that same tyrranical empire. The 9th century writer George Monachos, called *the Sinner*, vividly describes their incesant struggle against many foreign invaders: "*In the time of emperor Theophilos there was in Macedonia a commander named Kordyles.*[6] *He had a very brave son named Vardas, whom he left in his stead in charge of the Macedonians who were across the river Danube ... In desperation* (stranded in hostile territory), *the Macedonians made Tzantzes*[7] *and Kordyles their leaders ... And being unable to cross* (southward through) *Bulgaria they joined up with the Hungarians and told them all about the Macedonians.*

When the Turks (i.e. Bulgars) *saw this, they attacked ... and when they turned back, Macedonians pursued them.*"

Here the term 'Macedonians' could do with Macedonia as a military administrative province, with armies considered *Domestikoi* (*Domestic*) and with military operations. Persisting in his use of the term, however, George Monachos later appears to go beyond the simple dependence of the name of the inhabitants on the name of the region and

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_Renaissance

[6] presumably latinized form of *Kara-Dule.*

[7] presumably latinized form of *Tzane.*

removes any doubt of having in mind the specific people called 'Macedonians'. This can be inferred from the following passages in his 'Historia': "*A young Macedonian man called Leo, of Gomoston family, rose up…*"

Thus, a serie of rapid succeding circumstances changed the outcome of the events in the everyday struggle for freedom of the Macedonians. Conditions for an uprising against Romeians were created when foreign invaders and occupators of Macedonian soil clashed between each other, and some of them have lost their previous strategic positions, or even perished. Yet, the Macedonian national awakening in the second half of 10th century was only the culmination of the continuous Macedonic strugle for freedom, and reflection of historical antagonistic traditions of Macedonian great ancestors.

Several internal and external factors were in favor of the Macedonian uprising in that moment: the appearance of a unique national-Macedonic form of Christianity - the Bogomilism, the Russian-Romeian conflict, and the fall of the lower Danube Bulgar kingdom. In fact, the rebellion in Macedonia coincides exactly with the highest point of the hostilities between Kievan Russia and Romeian Empire, a conflict which started in the 9th century and culminated with the construction of the fortress Sarkel by the engineers from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (*Constantinople*). This fortress caused restriction of the Russian trade route along the river Don, in favor of the Khazars[8], one of the traditional Turkic tribes, adversaries of Kievan Russ, and then a Romeian ally. That meant an open declaration of war from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (*Constantinople*) to the Russians, but also provoked a conflict that lead to total annihilation of the Khazar

[8] member of a Turkic people who occupied a large part of southern Russia from the 6th to the 11th centuries and who converted to Judaism in the 8th century.

Previous page: **map of the main events, battles migratory and military movements during the 8th, 9th, and especially 10th century**

Khaganate. As expected, Kiev principality responded promptly by gathering his armies and starting a full-scale military campaign against the Romeian their new Jewish-Turkic allies, the Khazars. Sarkel fortress fell to Russians in AD 965, with the Khazar capital in the city of Atil following the same fate in 967/968.[9] A visitor to Atil wrote soon after Sviatoslav's campaign: "*The Rus' attacked, and no grape or raisin remained, not a leaf on a branch*." Their alliance with Constantinople appeared to be a fatal mistake, and the final result was the total elimination of the Khazar kingdom from the history stage. The once flourishing Khazar capital city of Atil was raised to the ground by the armies of Kievan Russ, and would be forgotten for the time being, until its ruins were rediscovered by the archaeologists in the late 20th century.

Above: **painting showing the destruction of Khazar capital Atil in 968/969**

The destruction of Khazar imperial power paved the way for Kievan Rus' Empire to dominate north-south trade routes through the steppe and across the Black Sea, routes that formerly had been a major source of revenue for the Khazars. Moreover, Svyatoslav's campaigns led to increased Russian settlement in the region of the Saltovo-Mayaki, greatly changing the demographics and culture of the transitional area between

[9] The exact chronology of Svyatoslav I Khazar campaign is uncertain and disputed; for example, Mikhail Artamonov and David Christian proposed that the sack of Sarkel came after the destruction of Atil.

the Taiga forest and the steppe. This violent shift of power in the Eastern Europe also posed a strong insurmountable barrier for the Turkic-Mongolic hordes, and created a formidable empire that will surpass in longevity both the Roman and Romeian empires.

The Khazar kingdom was only the first collateral victim of the Romeian-Russian war. Economic rivalry of the two superpowers developed into a periodic but long lasting strategic conflict between the old Romeian Empire and the rising power of the future Russian Empire. It all practically started back in AD 860, when the Kievan Grand Prince Oleg (879-912) with a fleet of *lodyas* (small boats) launched an attack against the Constantinople. His victorious campaign proved the might and independence of the new

Above: **The first Russian siege of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in AD 860 (detail from a medieval Russian icon). This first Romeian-Russian war lasted for more than 80 years, and ended in 944 when the Great Prince of Kiev, Igor, made a truce with the Romeian emperor**

upstart from the north. Other sources report the bad outcome of the campaign due to an unfortunate storm. It was recorded by the Romeian Chronicles that in AD 907 "*The emperors Leo and Alexander made peace with the Tsar Oleg and agreed to pay tribute, and they took the oath among themselves by kissing the cross, but let Oleg and his men-at-arms take the oath, according to the Russian law: they swore by their arms, and by Perun, their God and Volos* (i.e. *Veles*), *the cattle god and established peace. Furthermore they swore by their arms in Russian manner, by taking their weapons off and putting them at the feet of the idol, in accordance with their own custom*." Furthermore, according to the Chronicles, Prince Oleg "*hung his shield upon the Gate of Tsarigrad* " (which was a sign that "*he'll be back*") and sailed back to Kiev with the

treasures of his conquest/truce. Romeians take a note of that gesture and prepared for the upcoming war…

Then after, it was noted that in 941, Igor, the Grand Prince of Kiev also led a military invasion-fleet of some 1000 ships until the walls of Constantinople. But he suffered a great defeat, and it was reported that only 10(?) ships returned home. In a sea battle off the northeast coast of the Bosporus, the Romeian galleys, called *dromons*, decimated the Kievan fleet by using a terrifying instrument of war known as "*Greek fire*."[10] However great can be the exaggerations about the numbers of the Russian fleet, or the consequences of the naval battle, they lost this battle, but not the war. Igor retreated back to Kiev, and two years later in 943, having assembled an even more powerful force, he launched a successful assault against Constantinople and claimed for Kievan Rus the undisputed right to trade on equal terms with the Byzantine Empire. Some of the documented textual and archival material of these Romeian-Russian treaties (of 907, 912, 945, and 971) arrived to us through the monk Nestor's "Povest"('History'), a 9th century chronicle dating from 1095, and through John Skylitzes and Manasses Chronicle.

The Grand Prince Igor's son, prince Svyatoslav (i.e. 'Bright-glorious)[11] Igorevich, after 4 years of war finally destroyed the neighboring Khazar Khaganate, thus he continued his efforts against the next enemy and ally of the Romeian Empire, the Romeian vassal Turkic-Mongolic tribe of Bulgars southwest from his kingdom.

In the meantime the cunning Romeians looked to stipulate a truce with Russians, and completely turned the cards on the table. Their devious plan was treacherous for both the Russians and Bulgars: to throw the Bulgars in the same way like they did it with the Khazars, as a canon fodder to the Russians before they get too close, in order to weaken them as much as possible, even if that means to sacrifice all the allies they have. Thus, in 967 or 968, emperor Nikiphor sent his agent, Kalokyros (i.e. '*Kalo-the master*') to Svyatoslav, with the task of talking Svyatoslav into assisting him in a war against Bulgaria. Svyatoslav was even paid 15,000 pounds of gold and set sail with an army of 16,000 to 60,000 men (again different sources bring different data, but the larger number is more probable), including thousands of Pecheneg mercenaries.

Put aside the animosity between Romeians and Russians, they simingly "allied" against the Romeian now ex-vassal kingdom of Peter of Bulgaria. In fact the Bulgar kingdom was now contested by both, and its days were numbered. But, once again the Romeians managed to manipulate their new "ally", and As a part of the new agreement with the emperor Nikiphor, on August 967 prince Svyatoslav Igorevich, accompanied by the Romeian imperial ambassador Kalokyros as guide, crossed the Danube with an army of 60,000 men. Russians took and overran the north of Moesia, capturing twenty-four towns, and then the remaining Bulgars retreated from where they came, in a wartime stronghold at Khan Asparukh's old fortress of Little Preslav on the Danube. Nevertheless, Svyatoslav equally defeated them and conquered the fortress, and proceeded to occupy what was left of the Bulgar kingdom in the Macedonian Peninsula.

Warring around, Svyatoslav took such a fancy to this region that he seriously thought of moving his capital permanently from Kiev to *Pereyeslavets* (i.e. Small Preslav) on

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[10] Developed during the Middle Ages, "Greek fire" consisted of catapulting fireballs at enemy ships.

[11] Old Macedonian "*Svyati*" - 'shines, illustrious (also "*holy*")', and "*Slaven*" - 'glorious'.

Danube[12], which he found a most attractive spot; it was also an important economic centre, receiving silver, fabrics, wines and fruits from Macedonia; silver and horses from Bohemia and Hungary; and skins, wax and honey from Russia itself. Marching south, Svyatoslav captured Great Preslav in 969, proceeding thence to storm Philippopolis (today *Plovdiv*), the main metropolis of eastern Macedonia. With this campaign, and the intention to choose Small Preslav, i.e. *Pereyeslavets* ('*Small Preslav*' in Russian) near the Danube as a new capital, the Grand Prince of Kiev, Svyatoslau I Igorevich, was aiming to reconnect his kingdom with the ancient homeland of his Macedonic ancestors. His words on this issue were written down: "*Do not fond me in Kiev. I want to live in Pereyaslavets on the Danube. There lies the heart of my* (old) *fatherland*." – This may refer to the fact that in AD 813 large number of Macedonians (12,000) from Adrianople and its surroundings were expatriated north of Danube by the invading Bulgars, and maybe they were the true ancestors of the prince Svyatoslau Igorevich. However, the precise location

of the lands to which the Macedonians from Adrianople were banished is not revealed by any source so far. But, it is very probable that some of them moved further north, in order

[12] today village of *Nufăru* in Romania; it may also coincide with Preslav, but there's not clear evidence of this.

to escape from the savage Bulgars. And after 150 years they returned to repay the Bulgars for the suffering and pain they were exposed by being chased away from their homes.

Another exceptional manifestation of the close relations of Russians with the Macedonian Peninsula is shown through the toponyms, as for example from the old name of the river Danube - *Ister*, which gives us a perfect example of the common Macedonic duality with the river *Dniester*[13] - thus *Ister/Dniester* (see also Macedonic toponyms duality *Matia/Dalmatia*, *Paionia/Maionia*, *Has/Ras* (i.e. medieval *Raška*), *Maritsa/Strumitsa*, *Podrima/Zadrima*, *Tetovo/Zletovo*, etc.). There's even the city of Vinitsa in today Ukraine, an obvious copy of incomparably older city of Vinitsa in Republic of Macedonia.[14]

[13] *Dnester* or *Dniester*, a river in eastern Europe that rises in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine and flows 1,410 km to the Black Sea near Odessa. Russian name *Dnestr*, Ukrainian name *Dnister*.

[14] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinnytsia
; https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g6369103-Vinitsa-Vacations.html

MAP 15

TRIBAL DIVISIONS IN NORTHERN ALBANIA

Above: **Macedonic toponyms of north "*Albania*"; the centrality of Macedonia from where the toponyms are given is evident by the Macedonic names like "Podrima" - *'Down*(by)*Drim* (river)' and "Zadrima" - '*Behind*(the)*Drim* (river)'**

Further, beside the direct influence exercised through the war campaigns in Macedonian Peninsula, the Kievan Russ connections with Macedonia are confirmed also by prince Svyatoslav's mother relations, princess Olga, the regent of Kievan Rus' for her son Svyatoslav from 945 until 960. She was the first Russian woman who converted to Christianity (done in either 945 or 957), and she did it in Ohrid, the Macedonian Jerusalem. Olga explicitly did this in Ohrid because the Macedonian church was founded by Apostle Paul, and was one of the four Apostolic churches, the one with see in Constantinople wasn't. Russian historian M.D. Priselkov (1881 -1941) explains this:

"*She was a very shrewd diplomat, and in order to preserve the independence of Russia and to gain autonomy even in ecclesiastical affairs, she went and had been Christianized in Ohrid*." (Olga on the picture below)

Therefore, Kiev Russia received Christianity not from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (*Constantinople*), as claimed by modern politically biased historiography, but from the Macedonian Apostolic Patriarchate of Ohrid, successor of Justiniana Prima. The Russian

Church, according to Priselkov, was one of the eparchies of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, and remained as such until 1037, when the treacherous clergy from Constantinople uncanonically imposed their (political) jurisdiction over the Apostolic Patriarchate of Ohrid. Princess Olga was later proclaimed as Saint by the Russian church, by the honorific title '*Istapóstolos*', actually a corrupted short form of "*Ista* (*na*) *Apostolot*" - 'equal (to the) Apostle' in plain Macedonian. Priselkov's conclusions are sound and based

Above: **Romanov Imperial icon of St. Olga from 1895, made with silver, gold, color enamel, tempera. Collection V. Logvinenko**

on facts, one of which is that at the time of converting the Russians into Christianity, Russia had no firm and permanent ties with Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Rather the opposite – they were at war.

M. Speranski explicitly underlines that in the first years of Christianity in Russia the Macedonic influence was the "*most fundamental*", while M. G. Popruženko calls Ohrid Archiepiscopacy "*the pillar of the Orthodox Russia*". For these undeniably strong ties between Macedonian and Russian churches, speaks the unmistakable evidence of the very first Metropolitan of Kiev, Michail, who was an ecclesiastic deputy sent from the

Ohrid Patriarchate hierarchy. Accordingly, Russian church's position was under the jurisdiction of Archdiocese Macedonia and the then Ohrid Patriarchate until 1037. Another big reason, underlined by Priselkov, is that the Christian teachings and unique Macedonic rite[15] adopted by the Russians were linguistically comprehensible and distinctly closer to Kievan people than the Septuagint liturgies and sermons from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. All of this was also made possible and huge merit of

the first Christian University of Plaošnik (the hill above Ohrid), founded by SS. Kliment (Lat. Clement) and Naum in the beginning of the 9th century. This was the first institution of studied theologians and macedonian scholars But, the official suffragees of the modern politically-biased historiography are neglecting and intentionally hiding the historic facts, and are still pushing forward the politicaly agreed 19th century misleading version of the conventional history.

In the meantime, the "alliance" with the cunning Romeians wasn't meant to last very long. Emperor Nikiphor realized that the situation on the battlefield didn't happen according to the Romeian plans and got thoroughly out of hand. It seemed that the Russians would soon be appearing at the gates of Constantinople by land, as they already did several times by sea. Another disquieting factor were the news that patrician Kalokyras, the imperial ambassador sent to Russians, had turned traitor, and was seeking

[15] "*One thing is certain: the written language of Kievan Rus' was not based on any of the spoken languages or dialects of the inhabitants. In other words, it had no basis in any of the East Slavic dialects, nor did it stem from some supposed older form of Ukrainian, Belorussian or Russian. Rather, it was a literary language, known as "Old Slavonic", originaly based on the dialects of Macedonia, an imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian*", from "A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples" by Paul R. Magocsi, p. 107.

to make a bid for the imperial throne of Constantinople. This is of course exaggerated, as the Romeian sources and tale tellers are well known for deliberate manufacturing of all kinds of subtle deception.

Thus, Svyatoslav refused to turn his Macedonian Peninsula conquests over to the Romeians, and the parties fell out from the partnership as a result. Seen that their plan to use Svyatoslav army didn't developed as they wanted, the cunning Romeians rushed to bribe the Turkic-Pecheneg nomads to attack the Russians from behind. Thus in AD 968 they besieged Kiev, where the princess Olga stayed with Svyatoslav's son Vladimir. She was residing in the castle of Vyshgorod with her grandsons. Luckily, the siege was relieved by the "Družhina"[16] of Pretich, and immediately following the Pecheneg retreat, Olga sent a reproachful letter to Svyatoslav. He promptly returned and utterly defeated the Pechenegs.

In the meantime in Moesia the old Bulgar king Peter had also died in AD 969, and was succeeded by his son Boris II, who had been sent back from Constantinople, where he was held as guaranty-hostage from the vassal Bulgar kingdom.

Challenging the Romeian authority, Svyatoslav crossed the Danube again and laid siege to Adrianople, causing panic on the streets of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in the summer of 970. On the head of an army that now included Pecheneg and Magyar auxiliary troops, he invaded Moesia again, devastating Thrace, capturing the city of Philippopolis, and massacring its inhabitants. Nikiphor responded by preparing the defenses of Konstantinopplitana Nova Roma and raising new squadrons of armored 'Catafract' cavalry. Nikiphor was indeed in dire peril, but that wasn't all. In the midst of

[16] "*Družina*" - warring party, a fellowship battalion or 'squadron' in plain Macedonian/Russian. Compare with the similar term "*Drougarios*" from the same Macedonic root-word, but used in the Romeian army for the rank of 'captain'.

his preparations, Nikiphor was overthrown and killed by John Tzimiskes, who thus became the new Romeian emperor. The final blow came on the night of 10 December 969 from within his own imperial household. Empress Theophano had taken as her lover the Armenian general John Tzimiskes, who was the moving spirit in a palace plot that put an end to Nikiphor's life, as well as to his warlike plans, which were to be worthily continued by Tzimiskes himself. It is interesting to note that Tzimiskes, who was about to extinguish the first Bulgar kingdom, was born in a small Armenian town called Kožani[17] in Anatolia, which later adopted the emperor's name - Tšmiškatzak. He was a great' nephew of an outstanding Armenian general in the Romeian service, the *Grand Domestikoi* John Curcuas.

After taking the throne in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, John Tzimiskes immediately turned his attention to the situation in Moesia and Thrace, in the eastern part of the Macedonian Peninsula. But, being occupied himself with suppressing a revolt of Vardas Phokas in Asia Minor, John Tzimiskes sent his faithful commander-in-chief, the half-Armenian Vardas Skleros, to take charge of the military operations in Thrace and Moesia. The Russian prince largely failed to take the measure and predictions

of Tzimiskes's military genius, and sent insolent messages to Constantinople, affecting to order the Romeians out of Europe altogether, unless an enormous tribute was paid. But, the previous diversion with the Pechenegs done by the tricky Romeians proved very effective, and further advance of Svyatoslav toward south was already hindered. Instead it was the Romeians who launched a major counteroffensive at the end of 970 and/or beginning of 971. Vardas Skleros successfully defeated the coalition of Russ, Pechenegs, and Magyars in the Battle of Arcadiopolis, thus reversing the odds. Meanwhile, emperor John, having quelled the revolt of Vardas Phokas, returned to the Macedonian Peninsula with another large army, and promoting himself as the "liberator" from Svyatoslav, penetrated the impracticable mountain passes and shortly thereafter

[17] There are still many places called "Kožani" in today Macedonia.

captured Marcianopolis, where the Russ were holding a number of Bulgar princes hostage. The Romeian army led by emperor John I Tzimitskes swiftly profited from the situation and managed to utterly push back the Russians.

In the spring of 971, at the head of a large and well' trained army, John Tzimiskes set out on one of the most brilliant campaigns in Romeian history. With series of military actions in the Lower Danube region he drove the enemy out of Thrace, then he crossed the Mt. Haemus[18], and in April he took the Great Preslav back from the Russians after a furious battle. Svyatoslav's men then fell back to the Danube and fortified themselves in Silistra (Dristra, Drastar, Durastolum). Thus the Romeians besieged the fortress of Drastar (Latin: *Dorostolon*, today *Silistra*) on the Danube for more than two months (65 days), and after several hard-fought battles in the summer of 971 they defeated (?)[19] the Great Prince Svyatoslav I of Russ'. After three months the Russians and Varangians were worn out by the incessant assaults of the Romeian crack troops (Cataphracts) and harassment by fire-shooting ships of the imperial Romeian navy on the Danube.

Tzimiskes and Svyatoslav ended up the war by negotiating a truce, in which weaponry, armor and provisions were exchanged for the Russ departure. Thus the Romeians finally occupied back Thrace and lower Moesia, and following the victory once again incorporated the regions of eastern Macedonian Peninsula back under Romeian aegis. Svyatoslav negotiated an armistice to allow himself and his followers to return unmolested to his capital of Kiev, pledging himself never again to attack Romeian empire, or their Black Sea port of Cherson. Cut off and surrounded, Svyatoslav came to terms with John Tzimiskes and agreed to abandon the Macedonian Peninsula, renounce his claims to the southern Crimea, and return west of the Dnieper River. In return, the Romeian emperor supplied the Russ with food and safe passage home. Svyatoslav and his men set sail and landed on Berezan Island at the mouth of the Dnieper, where they made camp for the winter. But, he was ambushed by the Pechenegs on his homeward journey and slain in a battle close to the Dnieper rapids, in 972.

Emperor Tzimiskes returned triumphant to Constantinople, taking back with him as hostages the whole Bulgar royal family and great quantities of booty, to celebrate a traditional victor's triumph in the city. Instead of riding in the imperial chariot drawn by four white horses, he set in his own place of honor a greatly venerated icon of the Virgin, which he had brought with him from the reconquered Moesia. The emperor himself followed devoutly behind during the ceremony. Tzimiskes in front of the Romeian public stripped the Bulgar king Boris of the insignia of royalty, but later raised him to the rank of magister in the Romeian hierarchy. Boris's brother Roman was castrated, to disqualify him from attempting to restore the Bulgar monarchy. Dethroned, without heir and any land left, it was the end of the Bulgar dynasty and kingdom.

While Svyatoslav's southern campaign brought no tangible results for the Russ, it erased the Turkic-Bulgar statehood once for all, and left a needed power vacuum for the attacks and expansion of the Macedonian insurgents, and also for Basil II the Porphyrogenitus four decades later. The Bulgar Church then also lost its briefly

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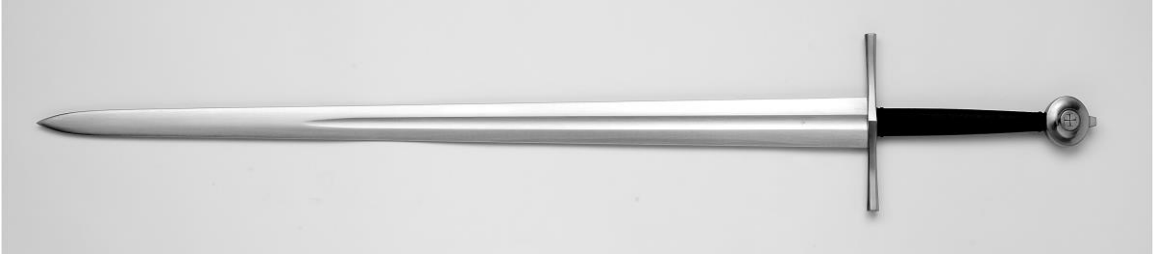
[18] today *Stara Planina*, i.e. '*Old Mountain*', or '*Balkan Mountain*' as of 19th century.

[19] This is the Romeian version of the facts, although, it is more likely that the draw was exaggeratedly depicted as a win by the Constantinople storytellers, as there is a lack of written information of the facts from the other side.

obtained, but non-canonical independent status[20], by returning under Constantinople and Ohrid Patrarchate jurisdiction. Thus, the non-canonical Bulgar patriarchate, previously unilaterally segregated from the Ohrid Patriarchate/Archiepiscopacy for futile motives, was suppressed for the time being, and the Bulgar church was retaken and subdued by the Romeian bishops sent from Constantinople. Thus, John Tzimiskes, after re-conquering Moesia in 971, he also abolished the newly created Bulgar patriarchate, and replaced it by the metropolitan in Drastar, subject to the Patriarch of Constantionople. Bulgar archbishops from the former Bulgar church seat in Drastar were sent to serve in Triaditsa (Serdica), Vodena and Moglena. The old hierarchy of the churches primate was restored.



In the end, the Russian invasion in the eastern parts of Macedonian Peninsula consequently helped the uprising in other parts of Macedonia. Directly or indirectly Samoil and Svyatoslav were allies against the Turkic-Bulgars and Romeians. And after the fall of the former, Macedonia has lived a moment of great relief from the yoke of foreign occupation.

[20] The first see of the Bulgar church (under jurisdiction of Constantinople) and kingdom was in Pliska, thenafter it moved in Preslav, and its last see was in the old Romeian fortress of *Durostorum* or *Drastar* (i.e. *Dorostol*). The early Romeian fortification facility *Durostorum* became the nucleus of the medieval town of Drastar. After the conversion of the Bulgars, it became the seat of the Bulgar Orthodox Church, and during the 2nd Bulgar Kingdom it was a metropolitan center.

THE KING IS DEAD - LONG LIVE THE KING!

"*The first date, the year 969*," writes Styepan Antolyak, "*marks the beginning of the formation of a state core in Macedonia under the leadership of the Komitopuli, who, after their liberation from the authority of the Bulgars began to extend their still small state in the shadow of nominal Romeian supremacy*."

The circumstances were going hand in hand for the Macedonian uprising in a fast manner, the liberation of Macedonia from foreign occupation was underway. Taking the advantage of Russian invasion by Prince Svyatoslav, who kept the Turkic Bulgars and Romeian empire armies away from the Macedonia proper, Macedonians staged a large successive rebellion. The following destruction of the Bulgar kingdom as collateral victim of the war between Kievan Russ and Constantinople created enough time and space for maneuver to Macedonians. So, they managed to quell their internal divisions and eliminate all the domestic traitors, feudal vassals, and overthrow the foreign military strongholds that tyrannized them and kept unable to reunite in a larger sovereign commonwealth. And after centuries under foreign occupation they finally formed a self-governing Macedonian state.

The 971 is seen as the year when the Bulgar kingdom ceased to exist, as well as the year when the hostilities between Romeians and Russians in Moesia ended. In 972 Romeians reconquested Preslav, and dethroned king Boris II. The captive Bulgar king was divested of the royal symbols, and soon after he was killed. The last remaining heir of the Bulgar dynasty, Roman, was also captured and taken as hostage to Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (Constantinople), where he was castrated, in order to prevent any eventual successor. This is how the Bulgar kingdom and dynasty ended.

The war with Kievan Russia and the mutiny of Vardas Phokas in all respect seriously hampered the Romeian Empire and exhausted their human and financial resources, so they soon retreated back to Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. It would take a decade or two for the empire to fully recover from the 30-years war and return its power to sufficient extent, which provided enough time and space for Macedonians to organize and grow in strength and numbers. By retaking a number of Macedonian regions in their hands, Macedonians and Macedonia were once again sovereign country and masters of its own destiny. Romeian authors, Leo the Deacon and John Geometres, who were witnessing the rise of Samoil's State, exemplified the danger for the Romeians coming from Samoil, although they did not refer to him by name. Leo stated that the new enemy army "*were harassing Romeian territory and mercilessly plundering the lands of the Macedonians*." Geometres demonstrated that "*Macedonian land showed the glow of newly risen star*" - that of the Komitopuli/Cometopoulos.[21] The "*land of the Macedonians*", which belonged to the Romeians and was represented by the Macedonian

[21] *Comitopoulli* – from Latin: *Comes*, i.e. *Comites* or *Komiti* in plain Macedonian; Eastern Romeian title, a commander with administrative functions, and/or leader of an army of *Compagnions/Druggarios*, with rang of *Herzog/Despot* during the peaceful times. Today preserved as corrupted '*commissar*': https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=commissar, and/or *komesar* in plain Macedonian: http://drmj.eu/search/komesar , anglicized: *commissioner*.

emperors, was endangered by the new rising star – Samoil Cometopoulos (i.e. 'the Commissioner') , who clearly also claimed the "Macedonian land".

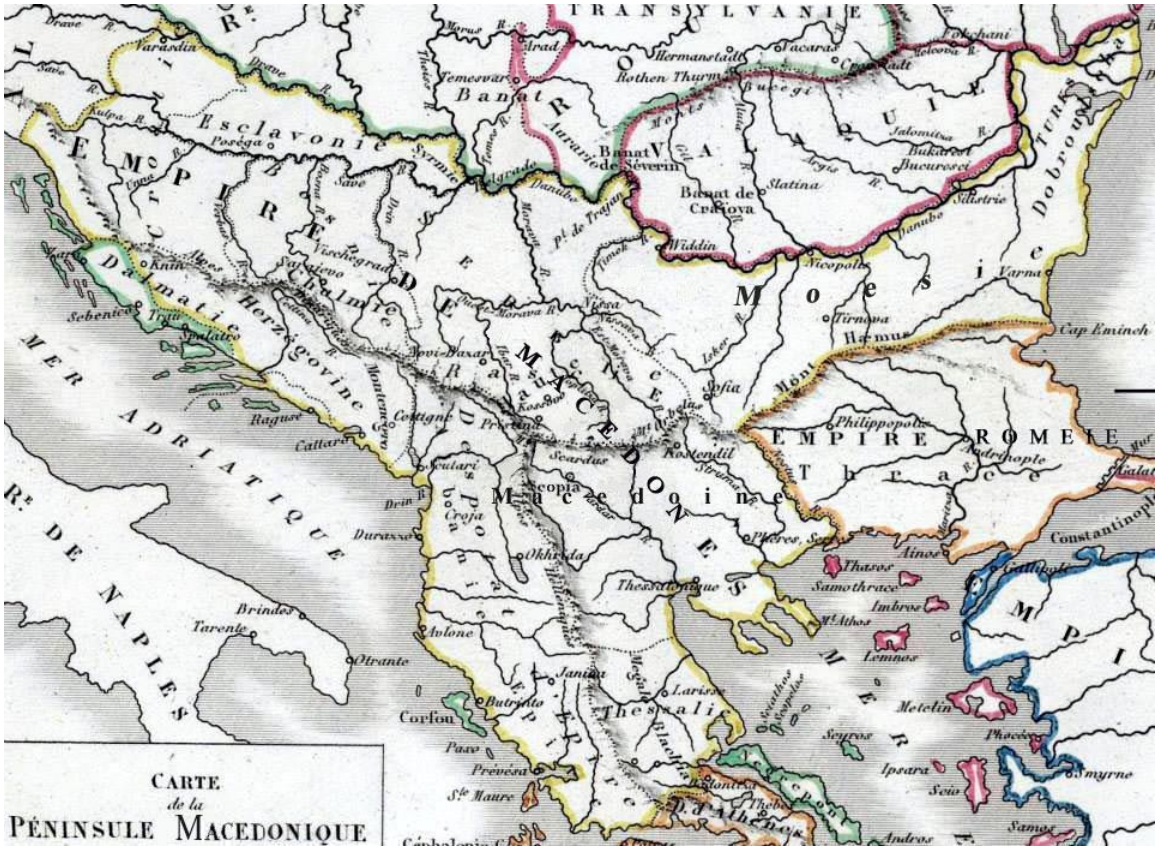
Thus, as one kingdom perished, another was born. The four sons of the Romeian drugarios and komitopulos Nikola - David, Moysey, Aron and Samoil, were the distinguished leaders of the rebellion in Macedonia until the conclusive phase of the struggle. In that moment, in AD 976, the emperor Michail Tzimiskes unexpectedly perished, probably poisoned while still in his prime, thus creating another big void of power. The news of his death provoked immediate expansion of the Macedonian rebellion, thus far centered only in the central and western regions of Macedonia. Another largely neglected fact is the remarkable coincidence that this uprising for

Macedonian independence was headed by a family of four brothers, which were half of Armenian descent, as in the case of deceased emperor Tzimiskes. And Armenians are equally of Macedonian descent too.[22] The actual name of the dynasty remains

[22] Ancient scholars, such as Erodot (writing circa 440 BCE), testify that the Phrygians of western Anatolia, who spoke an Indo-European language, had also made a contribution to the ethnogenesis of the Armenians: "*the Armenians were equipped like Phrygians, being Phrygian*

unknown. Cometopuli (Septuagint Koine: Κομητόπουλοι) is merely the nickname which is used by Romeian historians to address rulers from the dynasty as its founder. Obviously the old Roman DAMNATIO MEMORIA was still practiced in 10th and 11th centuries.

Furthermore, internal problems following the death of emperor John I Tsimitskes, and resuming of the hostilities on their eastern frontier in Asia Minor, created additional burden for the Romeian empire. The overall removal of the bulk of Romeian armies from the Macedonian Peninsula was promptly used by the *Komitopuli* (*counts, earls*) rebelion forces, and in the following years they occupied also the regions south of Danube, until



the Black Sea. Bulgar-vassal kingdom was gone, and Samoil annexed these, for brief time Romeian Empire territories, to his reign. Under *Komitopuli* command Macedonians quickly gained upper hand in overwhelming all the remaining opposition in the region. In

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colonists" (Herodotus 7.73). And Phrygians are noted as Brygians in Macedonia before their migration to Asia Minor. See more: "Brygians & Phrygians" by Eleonora Petrova: https://www.academia.edu/37262757/Eleonora_Petrova_-_BRYGIANS_and_PHRYGIANS_PARALLELISM_BETWEEN_THE_BALKANS_AND_ASIA_MINOR_THROUGH_ARCHAEOLOGICAL_LINGUISTIC_AND_HISTORICAL_EVIDENCE

973,it was noted by Roman Curia that Samoil sent envoys to the Holy Roman emperor Otto I in Quedlinburg in an attempt to secure the recognition and support for his lands. "*The year 976 marked the beginning of strong development of the state community, the borders of which soon extended from the Black Sea to the middle part of the Adriatic and to the Sava, Drava and Danube Rivers*," writes further Styepan Antolyak. The brothers ruled jointly in the newly established Macedonian state, utterly freed from the Turkic Bulgar menace from the east, and completely sovereign and independent from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma.

But, this joint rule lasted for a very short time. Of the four brothers, David was soon killed in the area between Prespa and Kostur in AD 976. In Macedonia the *Komitopuli* were supposedly mentioned for the first time with the occasion of this event which happened. Romeian foot soldiers patrol, locally called "*hoditai*" ("*walkers*", from Macedonic root verb "*Hodi*" [23] - 'walks' and "*tai*" - 'someone') killed David, the brother of the future Macedonian Tsar Samoil, in the ambush on the road between Prespa and Kostur (today "*Kastoria*"). This testimony comes from an interpolation in the chronicle of Ioannes Skylitza made by an unknown copyist who was obviously accustomed with the local history of Macedonia. According to Werner Seibt, the information comes from the lost work of Theodore of Sebasteia, who wrote a biography of Basil II. The word *hoditai*, which does not mean "nomads", concerns the same people who were recorded in the later sources with the name "*kjelatori*", involved in the military transportation. The name "*kjelatori*" renders the Roman word of Latin origin *călători* - '*transporters*'. It was presumed that this were local latinized Macedonians which fought against their own kin, a common feature of the so-called *Vlachs*, which as alienated autochthonous population often allied with the foreign invaders and fought against their own people. Thus, the conclusion is that the Romeian military road patrol who was guilty for that murder

[23] http://www.makedonski.info/search/hodnik - "*Hodnik*" – 'a corridor' in plain Macedonian, is the only word that preserved the medieval prefix "H", which dropped in today "*Odi*" - 'walks'.

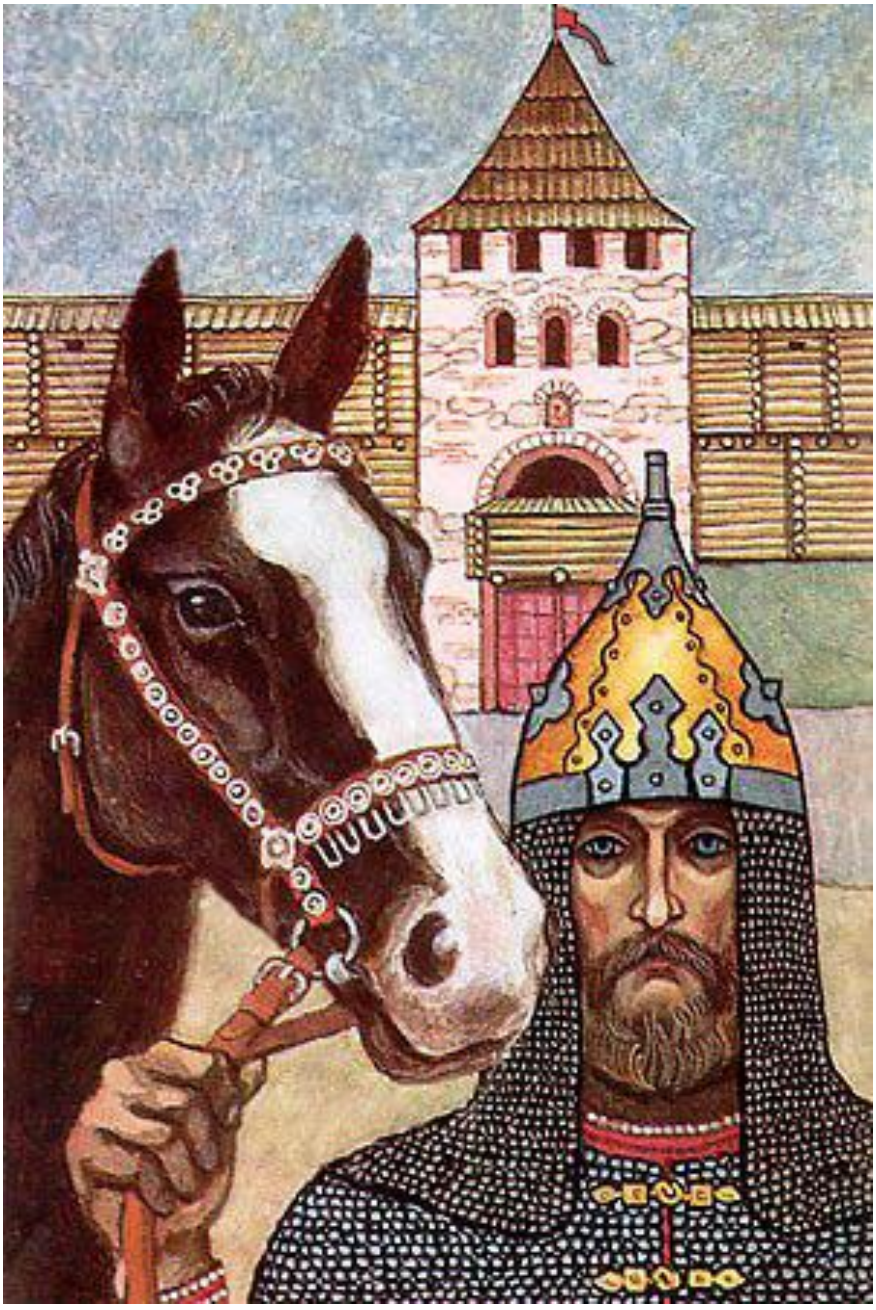
consisted of local guards, and that they acted as representatives of the Romeian authority against the rebelled Macedonians.

Moisey was slain during the siege of Serres. And, according to the records, Aron was eliminated together with his family by his own brother Samoil, who suspected a treason. However, Macedonians in Samoil found once again a great leader, and under his command they gathered their forces in a strugle for freedom. After settling internal affairs, around year 980 Samoil started with enlargement of his kingdom. Thus, by the end of 10th century Samoil succeeded in incorporating within his Macedonian Empire, beside the entire territory of Macedonia, most of the former Bulgar kingdom, part of Thessalia and Peloponnesus, a large part of Epirus, Duklya, Zeta, Raška, Bosnia and a part of Dalmatia. So, he almost restored the whole ancient territory of Macedonia as it was in the time of Filip II and Alexander III of Macedon, with exception of Thrace, Halkidic and the area around Solun, where the Romeians still had the upper hand. It must be also underlined that during that time the Macedonian Peninsula wasn't divided by ethnic and/or ideological cleavages, but only amongst church eparchies. Hence the territory of Samoil's empire corresponded with the ecclesiastic borders of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy – Justiniana Prima.

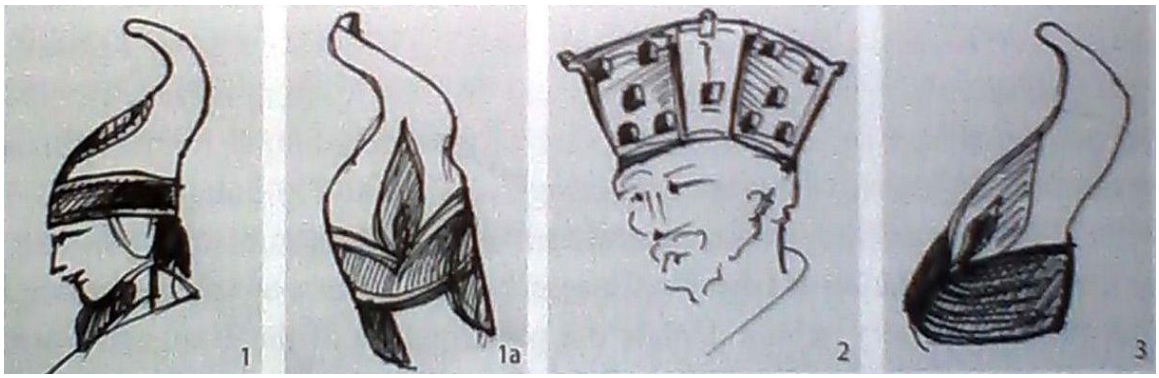
Above: **Jovan Dragašević (1836-1915) map of Macedonian Empire of Tsar Samoil at its height, printed in 1886 Atlas of Gustav Droysen**

TSAR SAMOIL

According to X century old drawings, it is known how exactly Samoil looked like, his son Gavril Radomir and his daughter Miroslava Kossara, or his wife Agatha and his nephew John Vladislav with his wife Mary. According to other drawings and paintings from XI and XII centuries, Tsar Samoil was about two meters high, had a reddish beard and always rode a white horse. All these people, the closest family of Tsar Samoil, are identified in the miniatures of the so-called *Madrid Manuscript* of the late XI or early XII century, thus soon after the death of Tsar Samoil, while the direct descendants of the Macedonian king were still alive.



The identification was made by prof. Dr. Milan Boškoski, from the Macedonian Institute of National History in Skopje. Tsar Samoil on the miniature from his daughter Mirosava wedding is aged about 50 years, and the character from this miniature, along with another two drawings are among the very few authentic portraits of the Macedonian King. In another Hungarian miniature he is shown with *Kamilovka* (Lat. *Kamilavkion*), a type of emperor's crown made of Camel ('Kamila' in plain Macedonian[24]) fur and a crown probably made other precious materials and gems.



"*Exploring the time of Tsar Samoil had a lot of data for various events that happened in his time, but especially interesting were the writings of John Skylitzes from the 'Madrid Manuscript', where he describes more specific historical scenes of the time. One scene is in which Gavril Radomir, the son of Samoil, saves him at the last moment and after the battle of Belasica carrying his father in Prilep .*

Similar scene is painted on one of the miniatures from Madrid Manuscript, and for the first time I managed to identify the personalities. On the miniature clearly are distinguished two groups of warriors: the first group in the cavalry attack, and the second group that retreats in front of it, actually withdrawing from the battlefield.

In the group that retreats is Tsar Samoil with his escorts. You may well have noticed that the left hand is holding a shield and a spear is in the right. According to the source it says that he was saved from certain death by his son, so you can easily identify that person near him is Gavril Radomir, who wears armor, and the third one is probably John Vladislav, Samoil's nephew, son of his brother Aaron. Persecutors are lead by Eastern-Roman Emperor Basil II. For this miniature in the literature is known only that its motive is the battle of Belasica."

However, according to Dr. Boškoski, the most significant of which is a miniature display from the wedding of Mirosava, eldest daughter of Samoil: "*The miniature shows the wedding ceremony in the cathedral church, and the ceremony was attended by close relatives of the bride. So if you are looking closely, you can see that the wedding ceremony is attended by a priest, three women and three men. Over the young couple is the word "marriage" which means that it is a church wedding. Above the three men, or the man in the middle is inscription "Samoil" which is undeniable proof that it is Samoil.*"

Wedding ceremony is led by Archbishop Philip, head of the Samoil's Church. The priest who performs a wedding service, it is next to the archbishop who is represented in

[24] http://www.makedonski.info/search/kamila

episcopal vestments with crosses. That Archbishop puts wedding crown on the young couple which stand before him with bowed heads. The bride is Mirosava, daughter of Samoil and the groom is Ashot, Macedonian nobleman from Solun. The event probably occurs in the cathedral St. Achilles of Prespa, on the island of Achiles.

It is historically confirmed that the event occurred in the AD 997, when Tsar Samoil had about 50 years and among women his wife Agatha can be identified, she is dressed in

festive clothes, gold jewelry and collar for formal occasions, but can be noted that under the formal gown wearing a red dress, a sign that she is eldest woman in the group. Next to her is Kosara , the second daughter and third woman is Mary, wife of John Vladislav, grandson of Tsar Samoil."

Next to Samoil is his son Gavril Radomir, brother of Miroslava, who has a white hat.

According to historical documents we can establish that Samoil married his wife Agatha between 972 and 975, and their first child Gavril Radomir came into the world before the uprising against the Eastern-Romeian Empire in AD 976.

RELIGION IN THE MACEDONIC EMPIRE OF TSAR SAMOIL

Samoil inherited long ecclesiastic tradition in his Macedonian state, that descends back to the 6th century and the establishment of the Justiniana Prima in Scopis (today Skopje). Also, an important if not the crucial role in the ascending of the 2nd Macedonian empire (actually the 3rd one, after the empire of Alexander the Great some 13 centuries before, and Romeian one, ruled by the Macedonian dynasty) was the Bogomil religious movement. Due to rivalry of two opposed kingdoms the Samoil's Church was established and existed without the blessing of Constantinople. Presbyter Cosma stated in his book about the founder of Bogomilism, the priest Bogomil, that he began spreading the teachings in 20-30 years of the X century (i.e. between 927 and 950) in Macedonia, which became the center of his preaching activity. According to a number of historical researches the Bogomilism had distinct features of a liberation movement against the feudal landlords and foreign oppression. Thus, the Bogomils were actually at the root of the rebellion of komitaji Nikola that began in AD 963. It is known fact that the komitopuli (lat. *comites*), i.e. the sons of Nikola - David, Moisey, Aron and Samoil, already accepted Bogomilism.

After the victory of the komitopuli and the establishment of Macedonian kingdom, the Bogomils ceased to verbally attack the upper Macedonian classes - the king, royal officials and high clergy, and rather allied with them, regardless of the fact that the state of Tsar Samoil was as feudal as those before him. There is a simple explanation for the sympathy of Tsar Samoil toward the Bogomils and their participation in his rebellion – the Bogomils were the only organized anti-Romeian and anti-Bulgar party in Macedonia, with clear patriotic Macedonian orientation. Also, it is worth to note that the 963 rebellion of the Macedonians broke out exactly in the region where Bogomilism was strongest, in the territory limited by the triangle of Vardar River, Lake Ohrid and Mt. Shar (Latin: *Scardus*), actually the northwestern region of Macedonia, which was the most distant from eastern and western main roads and centers of Romeian power.

Bogomils performed real patriotic deeds and gave their assistance to Samoil when he and his brothers started the revolt against the feudal yoke of Bulgars and Romeians from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. In respond, during his forty-years reign in Macedonia Tsar Samoil reformed Macedonian church and officialized Bogomil religious movement within the church institution, with the Holy Sees in Ohrid and Prespa, and allowed them to live freely in his empire that stretched from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, and from Thessalia to Danube. Further, with the convoluted accordance of the Pope in Rome (now contrary to their previous policy!)[25] he raised the Macedonian church of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy into autocephalous diocese, i.e. Patriarchate. "…*if Samoil elevated the first hierarch of the church in his empire to patriarch, without having obtained the*

[25] The Roman papacy has seen a chance to undermine the undisputed influence of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma over the Macedonian Peninsula eparchies by promptly inverting its previous stance of bitter animosity toward everything Macedonian (as of 6th century, when the Macedonian church was rendered independent from Rome by Justinian's imperial decree) - into ecclesiastic coalition with the empire of Samoil.

consent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, then the reference to tradition probably lay in the fact that he, as tsar, had followed Romanos' I procedure in doing so."[26] Thus, Tsar Samoil only benefited from the previous precedent made by the Romeian emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944), who against the Christian Church rules and with political decision issued a recognition and autocephaly to the Bulgar Church of king Peter in Drastar. This ethnophiletistic and noncanonical precedent was repaired by John Tsimiskes, but the damage of the established precedent was done.

Undoubtedly the power of Samoil's state was largely due to the support of Bogomils. But, the acceptance and promotion of this popular form of christian religion by Samoil is also one of the reasons why his empire was finally defeated – Eastern Romeian and Western Roman churches made desperate efforts to extirpate the Bogomilism, which was condemned as heresy by both of them. So, even though the Roman papacy supported the

[26] Günter Prinzing "The autocephalous Byzantine ecclesiastical province of Bulgaria/Ohrid. How independent were its archbishops?", *Bulgaria Medievalis* 3 (2002), pp. 358-359.

Macedonian church for political reasons, the Bogomilism wasn't condoned. The repressive measures taken by official church institutions and their Bulgar vassals against this "evil heresy" were very severe. Medieval Europe heresies and progressive movements, as we know, were extirpated by sword and fire, and the most feared instrument of this inhuman repression was the dreaded 'Inquisition'. Due to continuous persecutions and oppression Bogomils and their holy mission spread further across Europe, where they were known under different names: *Patareni*, *Kutugeri*, *Cathari*, etc. Despite of all the sufferings and despair, the patriotic role and struggle for freedom of the Macedonian Bogomils continued in the centuries after Tsar Samoil's state fell in 1018.

Other important legacy and probably the most remarkable religious achievement of the Samoil's Macedonian empire church institution is its mentor role of Christianization, and particularly in the Christianization of Kievan Russ and consequently of the whole Russia. The chronology of the Christianization of Kievan Russia coincides precisely with the time of Tsar Samoil's reign. In 976, after the death of the Romeian emperor John Tzimiskes, Samoil conquered the agonized Bulgar kingdom, and Macedonia expanded its territory to the Lower Danube and became a neighbor of the Kievan Rus. That made the communication between the two states easier and created opportunities for the future church and cultural influence of the Ohrid Patriarchate and Ohrid Spiritual-Literary School on the complete Christianization of the Russian state and people.

In AD 999 the Macedonian Church reached the apogee in its long history, through rising the apostolic holy see of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy into Patriarchate. In that moment the Ohrid Patriarchate – Justiniana Prima, which beside of becoming the most powerful Christian church in the Macedonian peninsula, had also the largest diocese and solid traditional connections to numerous episcopacies, from Malta to Moldavia, and from Thessalia to Bosnia. Thus, it is no wonder that the prince Vladimir the Great asked evangelic assistance from this culturally closest and big Macedonic church institution.

Tsar Samoil responded promptly to his request and in several occasions sent from the Holy See in Ohrid to Kiev shipments of holy books and educated priests, where they served the purpose of evangelization. Many of these more old Macedonian holy books are still preserved in the museums and churches of today Russian Federation.

It has been discovered that the famous "Novgorod Pages" are the remnants of the Macedonian Imperial Gospel from the X century.[27] In this way the people of Kievan Russ received Christian teachings and liturgy in the language that they could understand. Prof. Vladimir Moshin, who, besides the Macedonian Cyrillic fragments (Novgorod Leaflets, Hilandar Folios, Undol'skij's Fragments, Resen Fragments of "Triodion", Macedonian Cyrillic Folio, and Zographski Fragments) also added to the manuscripts created by the circle of the Ohrid School the 'Codex Suprasliensis' and 'Sava's book', which in Slavic scholarship were traditionally linked with the Preslav Literary Centre. According to Moshin, only two of the oldest Cyrillic manuscripts (created during the 10th century) have a non-Macedonian provenience - the Bulgar Enina Apostle and the Russian Sluck Psalter - which most likely was copied from a South Slavic (i.e. Macedonic) antigraph, connected to the Ohrid Literary School. The creation of almost all the Macedonian Glagolitic manuscripts from that period is placed at the end of the 10th or at the beginning of the 11th centuries, i.e., in the period of Tsar Samoil. According to the previous scholarly insights, the Codex Assemanius, the Zograph Gospel, the Euchologium Sinaiticum, the Psalterium Sinaiticum, the Glagolitsa Clozianus and the Sinai Missal were written in the literary centers of the Ohrid Literary School during the time of Samoil. In the Paleoslavistic scientific literature, only the Dimitri's Psalter and the Sinai small Menaion are placed in the 11th to the 12th centuries, while the writing of the Ohrid Folios and the Macedonian Glagolitic Folios is placed in the 11th century, without a precise estimate of the time of their creation. Macedonian Glagolitic fragment, also known in science under the name "Rila Glagolitic Folios", was found in the binding of the 'Adrianti Miscellany' which was written by Vladislav the Grammarian in 1473 in the Macedonian Žegligovski monastery (picture below) near the village of Matejče in R. of Macedonia. Taking into account the fact that the majority of the oldest preserved Glagolitic and Cyrillic manuscripts were written during the last three decades of the 10th century and the first two decades of the 11th century, when Macedonia was ruled by the Comitopuli Dynasty, we can conclude that in that period of almost half a century (970-1018), the literary centers of the Ohrid Literary School were characterized by rich literary activity. In addition, apart from

[27] "**Kupryianov**" or "**Novgorod Leaves**", a Gospel Aprakos from 10-11th century (fragment, 2 leaves), it is written in a uncial handwriting in two columns. The *Kupryianov Leaves* was discovered by I. K. Kupryianov at the library of St. Sophia's Cathedral in Novgorod. The text has ekphonetic note signs. Initials of the Old Romeian style in colors with application of gold were executed in the same technique as initials in the *Ostromir Gospel*: in colors and gold on a dark cherry-colored background. The language features show clear Macedonic redaction.
The assumption of Vladimir Moshin, which is the most credible, is that the *Kupryianov Leaves* were a part of the Macedonian Codex from which the *Ostromir Gospel* was copied. In Moshin's opinion, this original 10th century gospel, now lacking, belonged to Tsar Samoil of Macedonia, who sent it with other liturgical books to the Grand Kievan Prince Vladimir in connection with the adoption of Christianity in Kievan Russia. Then the Gospel along with other books from Macedonia was transferred north to Novgorod, where in the middle of the 11th century, in the scientist's judgement, this royal codex may have served as a model for the gospel commissioned by Ostromir, the governor of Novgorod. According to Moshin's estimation the place of origin of the missing codex, that contained the *Kupryianov Leaves*, is the city of Ohrid in Macedonia. In 1865 the manuscript was acquired from I. K. Kupryianov by the Russian Imperial Public Library.

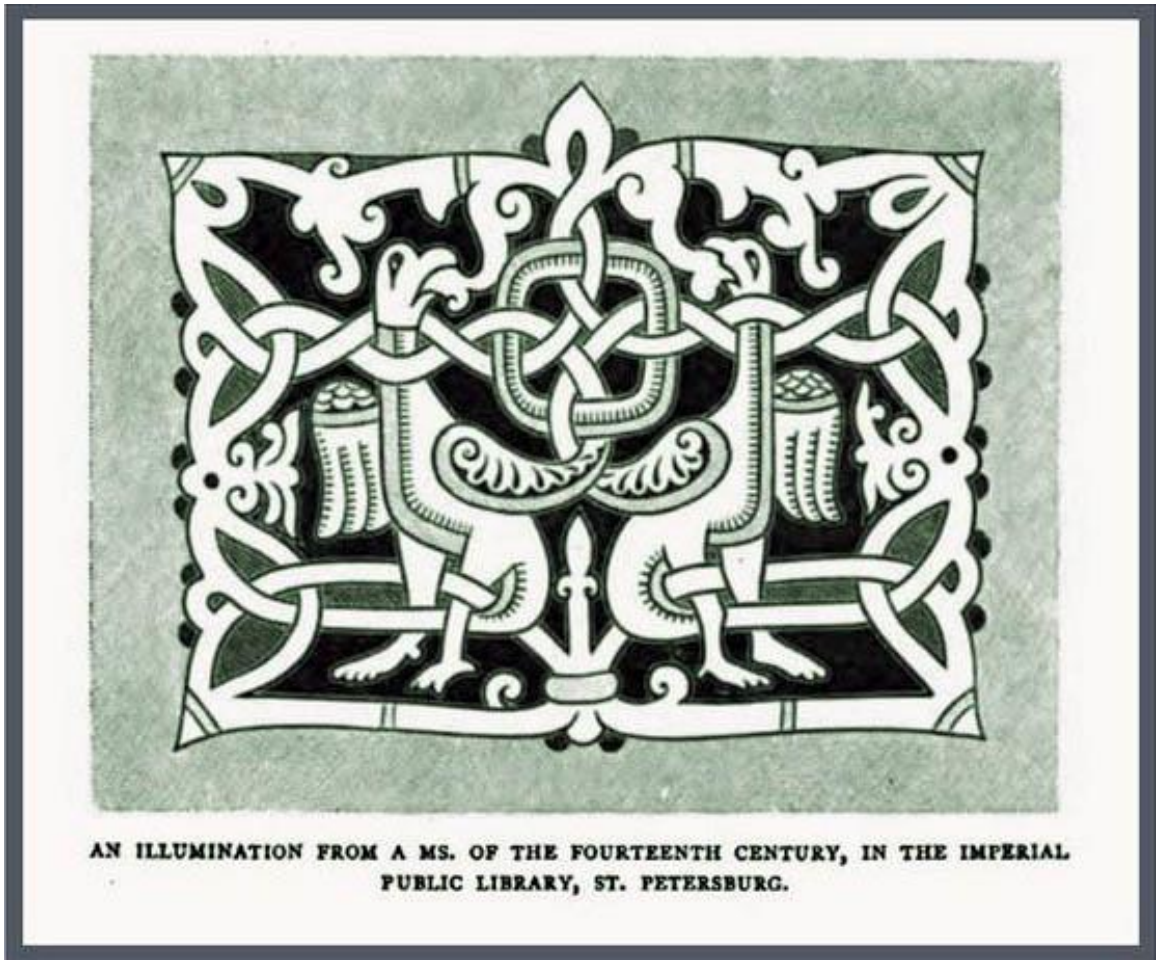
writing religious books and didactical books which were necessary for the normal continuation of religious life in Macedonia, original literature works were also written, as well as new translations of literary works from the Romeian church literature. Actually, in the period of Tsar Samoil, the Ohrid Spiritual-Literary School was the only active center of Macedonic literacy, and the Ohrid Patriarchate was the only church organization of the Orthodox Macedonians.

Above: **12th century frescoes from the church of St. Pantheleimon near Skopje, R. of Macedonia**

Previous similar mission of Cyril and Methodius's to Great Moravia (AD 863) was set out from Solun in Macedonia because "*the inhabitants of this city could not but know the Macedonic language well*," as the emperor Michael himself told to Cyril. And same as his predecessor, the Great Moravian prince Rastislav, who century before Vladimir asked for Macedonic evangels and priests from Macedonia in order to baptize his suzerains in their own language - the Great Prince Vladimir from Kiev made the same by requesting liturgical books and Christianization for his people in their language - again from Macedonia.

Above: **a page from the "Novgorod leaves"**

The tight relations between Kiev Eparchy and Ohrid Patriarchate are clearly summarized in the Paul R. Magocsi book "A History of Ukraine: The land and its peoples," where on the page 107 he draws a following conclusion: "*One thing is certain: the written language of Kievan Rus' was not based on any of the spoken languages or dialects of the inhabitants. In other words, it had no basis in any of the East Slavic dialects, nor did it stem from some supposed older form of Ukrainian, Belorussian or Russian. Rather, it was a literary language, known as "Old Church Slavonic", originally based on the dialects of Macedonia, an imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian.*"



AN ILLUMINATION FROM A MS. OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, IN THE IMPERIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY, ST. PETERSBURG.

There were also other reasons why the prince Vladimir asked the Christianization assistance from Tsar Samoil. One of course is above mentioned fact that in that time Kievan Russia was in war with the Romeian empire. But there was another one - the first wife of prince Vladimir, the mother of his two sons Boris and Gleb (now celebrated as the very first Russian Saints in whole Russia), was princess Ana from Ohrid.[28]

It is significant also to emphasize the fact, when Bulgar church is considered, that whereas the Bulgar orthodox kings Boris, Simeon and Petar are frequently glorified in the monuments of Bulgar-Christian literature and have become the object of a national cult, Tsar Samoil's name is almost entirely absent from the Bulgar Orthodox manuscripts and is always surrounded by a veil of reserve. The explanation of this exclusion lies within the position of the Bulgar church within Samoil's Macedonian empire. By setting up a Macedonian Patriarch of his own, Samoil had severed all relations with the ecumenical Holy See in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, of which the Bulgar church was subordinate. But, he also refused to recognize the Romeian complete abolition of the ex-Bulgar Patriarchate of Preslav, an act decreed by emperor Jovan Tzimitsces, and submitted Preslav as it was before, thus reapplied its lower status as eparchy under the then Macedonian Ohrid Patriarchate/Archbishopric – Justiniana Prima. The fact that he

[28] P. Dimitrov "Vladimir the Baptizer and Princess Ana", 1989.

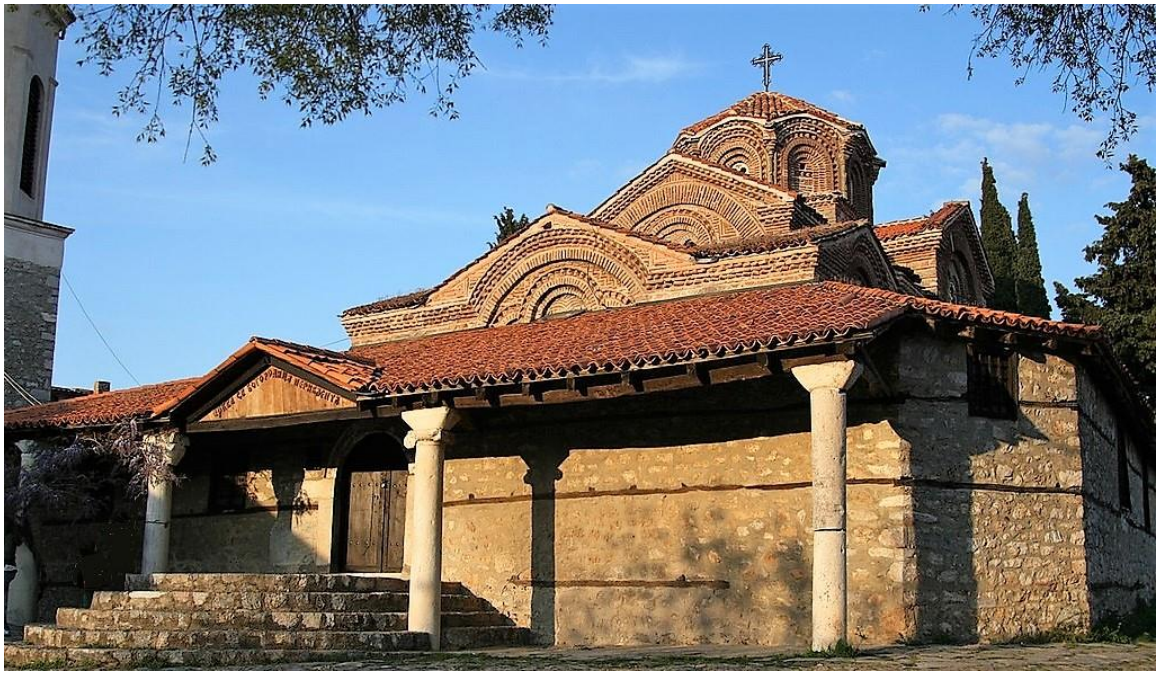
retook over the ex-Holy See of Preslav with its previous original rank of eparchy, under jurisdiction of the Holy See in Ohrid, is another solid confirmation of the undeniable

Above: **a marble parapet slab from the altar of St. Sophia basilica in Ohrid. X century, Republic of Macedonia**

Macedonic character of Samoil's Empire. Even the most laic observation shows the inescapable conclusion, and one do not need to know the church canonical and hierarchy rules to draw a logic conclusion, as they strictly forbid for one state to have two or more highest ecclesiastic instances, especially if they are based on the most forbidden ethnical and non-canonical premises. Tsar Samoil promptly reassertion of the ex-Bulgar Patriarchate as it was before, as eparchy under the Ohrid Patriarchate jurisdiction, shows his indifference for the Constantinople politicaly-created Bulgar vassal church. On contrary, as already explained above, he profited from their precedent in order to legalize his Macedonian church. This was a clear statement of his Macedonian origin and Macedonian Apostolic Church orientation, and by reaffirming Ohrid and Prespa as holy sees of his empire he underlined this statement.

Apart from linking the traditions with the cult of St. Clement, later Ohrid Archbishops starting from Theophylakt traced even older origins that stretched back to Justinian I's time. Emperor Justinian I (527-565) and his Archbishopric Justiniana Prima provided more solid arguments in justifying the old rights of the Archbishopric, by which the continuity of the ideological superiority in the Macedonian Peninsula was

demonstrated. An illustrative example of the propensity of linking Ohrid Archiepiscopacy with Justiniana Prima is the work of Michael of Devol, who was acting as a bishop in the Macedonian town of Devol in the early 12th century. [29]



A chronicle published in 1891 by archimandrite Leonid Kavelin summarizes the timeline of some officially recognized main events (here below is the excerpt regarding the 9th and 10th centuries) which testify the history and spread of the Macedonic liturgy and literacy through the past centuries. As follows:

855-860. - Compiling of the Glagolitic Script by Constantine Philosopher (St. Cyril) during the Metodius military mission against Bulgar hordes in the Bregalnitsa region.

862. - Compiling of the Cyrillic Script by Constantine Philosopher (St. Cyril).

862. - Macedonic liturgy and Glagolic/Cyrillic script officially introduced in the kingdom of Raška (today *Serbia*), then ruled by king Mutimir.

865-867. – Initiating of the Great Moravia mission, the Great Moravian Academy (Velikomoravské Učilište) founded by Cyril, where followers of Cyril and Methodius were educated, by Methodius himself among others.

867. - Macedonic liturgy and Glagolic/Cyrillic scripts officially introduced in Bosnia and Dalmatia. SS Cyril and Methodius trip to Rome. Pope Hadrian II blesses the holy books in Glagolic and Cyrillic and writes a papal bull to the king Rastislau, prince Svetopolk and Panonian king Kocel in which he blesses the use of the Glagolic and Cyrillic scripts in Great Moravia and Panonia.

[29] Mitko B. Panov, "The Ohrid Archbishopric and the Ecclesiastical Identity in Byzantium".

869. - St. Cyril's death in Rome. St. Methodius continues his mission in Great Moravia alone.

870. - St. Methodius returns again to Rome and was elevated into rank of Episcope of the Moravia and Panonia in order to be consecrated into Archbishop of Syrmium (today *Srem*).

870. - Macedonic holy service and Glagolic/Cyrillic script officially introduced in Bulgar kingdom.

870. - Intensifying of the conflict (Christianimosity) between Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma and old Rome for the domination over Macedonic sclavinii (enclaves) throughout the Western Balkan and Central Europe.

873. - St. Methodius baptizes the Czech prince Borivoy and his wife Lyudmila following the Macedonic rite and language.

877. - Croat ruler Sdeslau becomes vassal of Constantinople. St. Cyril disciples introduce Macedonic liturgy and Cyrillic Script in the Croato-Dalmatian state.

879. - Croatian ruler Sdeslau is killed by Branimir, who fearing the repercussions from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma surrenders to Rome. Seeing the opportunity the Roman church immediately begins with inquisition-cleansing and persecutions against Macedonic liturgy in Dalmatia.

885. - St. Methodius dies.

886. - After the death of their spiritual father and mentor, the disciples of St. Methodij lead by St. Kliment Ohridski - Naum, Gorazd the Moravian, Angelarij, and Lavrentij were banned from Great Moravia by Latino-Germanic priesthood. They escaped to the newly formed Bulgar kingdom then ruled by king Boris (Michail), the first Bulgar Han that converted Bulgars to Christianity. As the Bulgars desperately needed preachers he consented to them Velička eparchy, north of Solun (the then Bulgar kingdom was vassal of Romeian Empire and in that moment held large occupied parts of Macedonia) with Erichon and Konina in the southwestern part of Macedonia (then called *Kutmičevitsa Region*) and they settled there and continued with their work in Ohrid. In the following years they returned to Ohrid, a university and spiritual center of the Macedonic enlightenment, and Gospels of the holy books spread from there across the whole Macedonic world. One of these codexes served as the prototype of '*Ostromirovo Evangelie*'. Written not later than AD 960, in the year of the death of St. Gregori, the Moesian episcope.

891. - After insistent fallacy-complains of the Latin-rite priesthood, pope Stephan V orders to the renowned diakon (lat. '*deacon*') Theodosij to limit his preachings in Dalmatia only to his eparchy. Theodosij's successor, episcope Alfred, continued the efforts of his predecessor in preserving the Macedonic rite and Glagolic scripture.

923. - Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, confronted with the renewed Bulgar invasion from northeast, stipulates a truce with Rome.

925. - City of Split Conference declares St. Methodij 'heretic' and his Glagolic/Cyrillic books are banned. The Glagolic eparchy of Nin was sparred but limited, Macedonic liturgy was forbidden. The episcope Grigory of the popular church protests, but in vain.

928. - Second Split Conference - Macedonic liturgy forbidden again. Nin eparchy was closed down.

959. - Princess Olga (890-969), grandmother of the great Kievan prince Vladimir, travels to Ohrid where she is christianized.

988. - Macedonic holy service and Glagolic/Cyrillic script officially introduced in Kievan Russia. The Great Kievan Prince Vladimir converts to Christianity baptizes the Russian people. Tzar Samoil of Macedonia sends him preachers and shipments of Macedonic liturgical books from the Holy See in Ohrid.

998. - Prince Vladimir of Kiev also sends the evangelist Mark the Macedonian to the Volga Bulgars to spread Christianity; four Bulgar princes convert, and resettle in Kievan territory.

1054. - The Great Schism of 1054 finally divides Christianity into eastern and western branches.

1077-95. - Hungarian king Wladyslaw I (later Latinized as *Ladislaus I*)[30] advanced the spread of Christianity in his kingdom as a consequence to the traditional Hungarian alliance with Samoil's empire. His pure Macedonic name-title ('*Rule-glorious*' i.e. '*Wladei-slawen*' in plain Macedonian) unveils the original adherence to the Eastern Church rite, as he was baptized with classical Macedonic name according to the Macedonian holy service.

[30] Ladislaus I (1040-1095), canonized as *St. Ladislaus*, and Ladislaus II (1351-1434) - medieval kings of Hungary; see also the Russian cities of *Vladimir* ("*Vladei*" - rule; "*Mir*" - the world), *Vladikavkaz* ("*Vladei*" - rule; "*Kavkaz*" - the Caucasus), *Vladivostok* ("*Vladei*" - rule; "*Istok*" - the east), etc.

THE CORONATION OF KING SAMOIL INTO TSAR (EMPEROR) IN AD 1001

The only source that mentioned the church of Rome crowning of Samoil is the correspondence of Pope Innocentius III (1198-1216) with Ioannitsa Kaloiannes (1197-1207), the ruler of Bulgars and Vlachs. In a response letter to "Pope Innocent III" from January 1202, Kaloiannes acknowledged his devotion to the Roman Papacy, that originated from the "*blood and fatherland*" initially attributed by Innocent III. Aspiring to obtain justification from the Roman Pope for his claim to the title as emperor, and to legitimize the newly founded Church in Tarnovo, Kaloian made a reference to Peter and Samoil, as emperors crowned by the Roman Papacy: "…*In the first place, we, as a beloved son, desire from our mother, the Roman Church, the emperor's crown and dignity, the same as our old emperors had. For we found it written down in our books that one of these was Peter, another Samoil, and there were others who were before them*."[31] – Here the wannabe ruler of Bulgars and Vlachs lied about the alleged "Roman Papacy coronation of king Peter", as it is well known that Peter received his title from Constantinople, not Rome. A fallacy well known to the Roman Curia and pope Innocent III too, but, pope Innocent tacitly ignored and abused the plain lie of Kaloian. The street-

[31] Mitko B. Panov "Who Crowned Tsar Samuel: Appropriating the Byzantine ideology in the 13th century Balkans".

cheat Kaloian never received any direct acknowledgment by Innocent III, for his invented traditions based on the false assertion of the involvement of the Papacy in the coronation of Simeon and Peter was anyway used in the correspondence.

The Rome street-cheat Innocent used the invented claim by Kaloiann for his own demonstration of the projected right of the Papal involvement in the Macedonian Peninsula, giving an impression that it was illegally interrupted by Romeian Patriarchy and Basil II. This was a plain fabrication, as it was the fictive notion of the involvement of Roman Papacy in the coronation of Peter.

In February 1204, pope Innocent finally informed Kaloian about his decision to recognize his status, however not as an emperor, but as "*king of the Bulgars and the Vlachs*". Kaloian's priest Basil also received the title of archbishop, not of a patriarch. The contents of this letter shows that the pope Innocent refrained from recognizing the claim of Ionanitsa Kaloian regarding the alleged involvement of the Papacy in the coronation of Simeon or Peter, which was reflected in granting the title king, not of emperor. Furthermore, Kaloian had to wait 9 months for the performance of formal coronation by the papal legate in Tarnovo. Actually, Rome was appropriating and adapting the ideological religious construct of Romeian Empire, turning it against Constantinople. The essence of this construct was based upon the equally invented, though opposite, ideological claims by Constantinople. Thus the basis of the conflict between Constantinople and Rome laid in their common tendency to create an image of their own immediate involvement in political and ecclesiastical traditions stemming from the coronation of Samoil and Peter, though in the case of the Roman Papacy this could only apply to Samoil's coronation, while in the case of Romeian Church jurisdiction to that of Peter.[32]

Yahya of Antioch mentioned that Samoil "proclaimed himself as emperor". At the close of the 10th century, Pope Gregory V heralded and blessed king Samoil as a king, and the empire of the youngest son of the komitopuli Nikola started to acquire international character and recognition. Thus, Samoil's empire was internationally promoted and officially recognized first by the Catholic Roman Curia[33] and then by Hungary and Principality of Zeta. In addition Samoil represented a new Macedonian imperial dynasty. To avail and approve the claim of his reign was the consent of two apostolic Holy Sees - beside the Roman-Catholic church there was also authority of the autochthonous Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, successor of Justiniana Prima and the centuries-old Praevalitana.[34] His empire was founded on a new statal and legal basis, with new twin capitals in Prespa and Ohrid, and with a precisely defined core centered around Macedonia, Macedonian church, and the Macedonians as the fundamental constitutional

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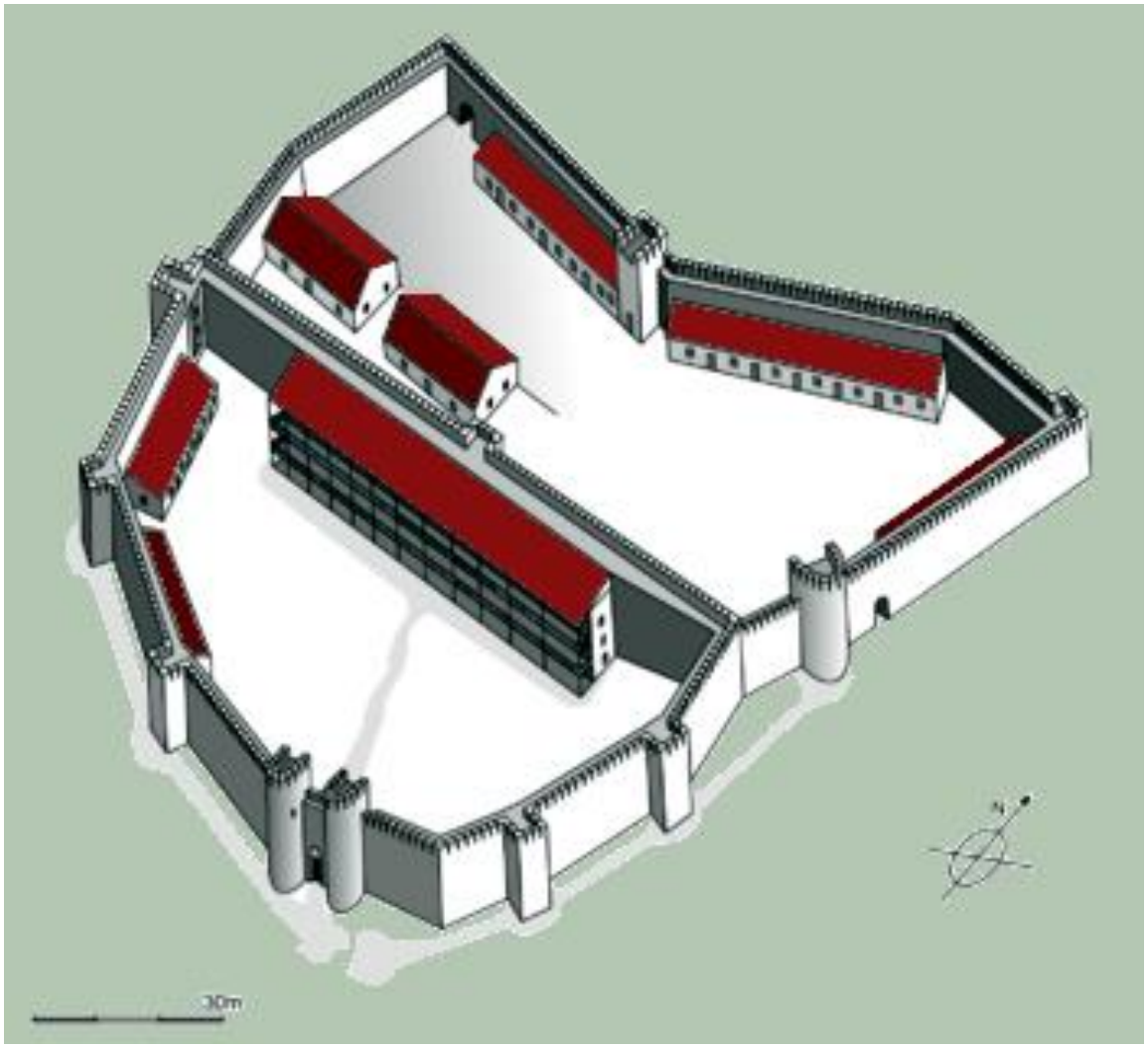
[32] Mitko B. Panov "Who Crowned Tsar Samuel: Appropriating the Byzantine ideology in the 13th century Balkans".

[33] It must be underlined that this move of the Roman Papacy wasn't motivated by altruist feelings. It was just another in the line of attempts of the western church in Rome to re-conquer its 6th century-lost possessions in the east, with the excuse of "*reuniting all the christians under one kingdom of Christ*." It's pity that their excuse collided with the exactly same idea of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma …

[34] The province of Praevalitana initially was part of the Diocese of Macedonia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praevalitana#Province

elements of the new empire. All of this points to the fact that Samoil's empire wasn't merely a continuation of the old Macedonian traditions, but a new independent Macedonian political entity, which emerged free from the Romeian and their Bulgar vassals yoke.

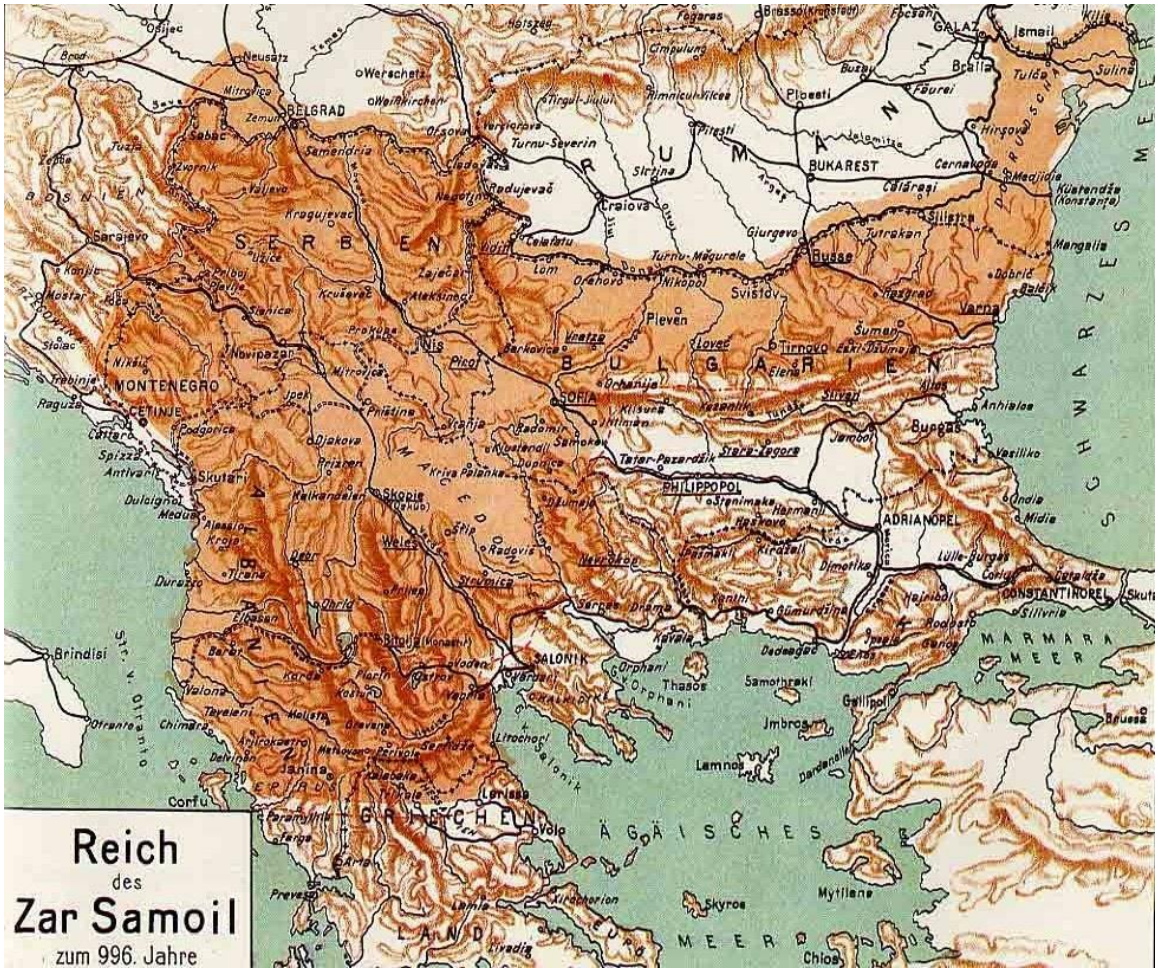


Above: **computer graphic reconstruction of the Samoil fortress on the top of the hill above the holy see of Ohrid**

Dr. Boškovski, who in recent years intensively studied all available documents of that time in order to identify the characters from the above mentioned miniatures, and according to him it can be certainly confirmed that the imperial crowning ceremony of king Samoil, in the presence of the papal legates, the Patriarch of Prespa and Ohrid, Philip, higher clergy, the royal family of Macedonian nobles, international representatives of the Hungarian royal court, and Principality of Zeta court, was committed in Ohrid, in the newly built cathedral church of St. Sofia, a counterpart of the church of St. Sofia in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. The imperial ceremony was performed at Easter AD 1001. Due to the fact that the coronation ceremony required to be performed by the Patriarch, it is possible that, for the official crowning of Samoil, the

Archbishop Philip, in the presence of the papal legates, previously was ordained into Patriarch, and then after he committed the imperial crowning ceremony of Samoil.

According to the additions and corrections of the Devol chronicler and bishop, Michael, "*there was a significant amount of building and painting*" done in the empire during the epic reign of Samoil. In Ohrid Samoil built imperial palaces and a church which after Presopa and Prilep was to be another see of the Macedonian Apostolic Church. It is also significant to note that, throughout the existence of the second Macedonian Empire, the capital was situated within Macedonia - another confirmation of the essentially Macedonian character of this medieval Macedonian state. His declaration as emperor resulted with the establishment of an alliance with the Principality of Zeta and the Kingdom of Hungary, which was utterly stipulated by marriage between Samoil's son Gavril Radomir with the Hungarian king Stephen sister.



At the end the official recognition of the Samoil's title of emperor by Pope Sylvester II (999-1003) in AD 1001 practically resulted with the creation of three holy empires: the Eastern Holy Romeian empire, the Western Holy Roman empire, and the Macedonian Holy Empire of Tsar Samoil in the middle. As confirmation of these events is the sudden worsening of the relations between the Eastern-Romeian emperor Basil II and the Roman popes that year, when he abandoned the friendly politics and traditional pro-Rome strain for their interference in the Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (then former) spheres of influence. Such is, among the other points of the Ostrogorski conclusion, that at the time of Ecumenical Patriarch Sergei (999-1019), the name of the Pope was deleted from the diptych of the Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma church. But, already in 1024 negotiations for a peaceful separation of the spheres of influence were led between Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma and Rome, endeavoring the Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma "universal in its sphere."

THE TOTAL WAR BETWEEN TWO MACEDONIAN EMPERORS

When the Romeian emperor John I Tzimiskes (himself from the Macedonian dynasty too) died, he was succeeded by his ward and nephew, Basil II, who had been nominal co-emperor since 960. The new Romeian emperor Basil II Porphyrogenitus immediately confronted the creation of the Samoil's empire and started a fierce war against him. Animosity and bellicose efforts between the two grew exponentially especially after the Samoil's coronation for Macedonian Emperor (Tsar). In the coronation of Samoil Basil II clearly recognized the intention of the Roman Western church, through supporting the third participant in the claims for supremacy over Christianity to utterly undermine the influence and shrink the boundaries of the Eastern Romeian empire with the Holy See in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Thus, Basil II intentions about this question were immediately and crystal clear, and the only possible choice was to absolutely destroy Samoil's empire. Soon after settling the internal afairs against powerful generals from the Anatolian aristocracy at home, he immediately took necessary steps against his opponent and nemesis. The struggle with Samoil became Basil's main task, the destruction of his Macedonian Empire an opsession.

Against the mighty Macedonians he appear to have sought the support of some of the rulers of other principalities, like the prince Jovan Vladimir of Diocleia.[35] But, this Romeian-Macedonian war, that lasted almost forty years, will thoroughly exhaust the sources, lifes of both the empires of Tsar Samoil and Basil II. At the end of the day calculated intention of Roman papacy by supporting the new Macedonian empire will achieve its cunning goal of drastically weakening the resources and positions of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma.

After he became an absolute monarch, Samoil began an offensive war against the Romeian Empire. According to Romeian sources first he aprofited of the ongoing Russo-Romeian war and the internal strife in the empire to attack the whole southwest, i.e. the Romeian domains in Peloponnesus. The first military expeditions of Samoil were aimed toward Thessalia, where he managed to win a few strongholds in the besieged city of Larissa, and after several attempts to seize the whole city in 985. It was bloodless conquest, and many people were taken captive, including the beautiful Irene in which the son of Samoil - Gavril Radomir fell in love with. From Larissa Samoil also took the relics of Saint Achilles and disposed them in Prespa.

With the fall of Larissa the path for Samoil's army was opened to the rest of Aegean regions, and he forced the Romeian emperor to react. Basil II prepared a strong army and directly invaded the central region of Macedonian empire, and besieged the city of Triaditsa (Lat. *Serdica*). Besides the main body of the Romeian army there was the second army under the command of Leon Melesin, who had the task to protect the rear of the emperor from the attacks. According to Deacon Leo the siege of Triaditsa lasted 20 days, but in the meanwhile around the city arived Tsar Samoil with his army, which he deployed on the surrounding mountains. The direct conflict didn't happened immediatelly, but Basil II felt uncomfortable and in the summer of 986 interrupted the siege and started to retreat toward Philipopolis (today *Plovdiv*). Tsar Samoil, found himself rather encouraged by the Basil's uncertain move, as he saw in the withdrawal of

[35] "Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates" V.12, Issue 1, Part 2 by Georgie Ostrogorski, p. 255.

the Romeian emperor an act of fear and hesitating, and finally toke the bold decision to attack. On 17 August 986 he led his Macedonian army into the Battle of Traian's Gate in which the Romeians were disastrously defeated. Romeian army was surrounded in narrow and inaccessible places and was attacked from all sides. Many Romeian soldiers were killed or captured.

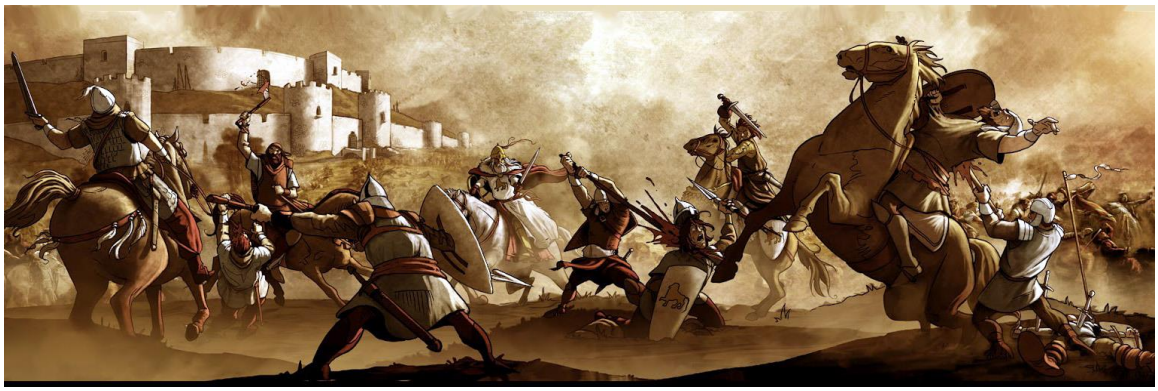
According to Skilitsa the emperor Basil II barely managed to escape, retreating to Philipopolis. Leo the Deacon, who participated in the battle, says that all Romeian cavalry was destroyed and the army was in panic and chaos. Captured were the imperial flags, royal treasury, the whole war material, together with the royal tent. The famous poet John Geometre in a poem mentiones that:

„*arrows of the Macedonians overcame the spears of Avzones*..."

Encouraged by this great victory Samoil in 986 marched toward Dalmatia. For this Macedonian campaign there's data in the chronologies of Pop Dukljanin (Priest of Diocleia) who says that Samoil attacked the possessions of Diocleian prince Jovan (John) Vladimir Vlastimirović, because he was a Romeian ally. Jovan Vladimir escaped with his followers in the mountains. But he was captured and sent as prisoner of war to Samoil's court in Prespa. Tsar Samoil then reached until Zadar, then he passed through Bosnia, Raška and Zeta, and unchallenged he added these regions to his rule and thenafter he returned to Macedonia. With these new territories Samoil molded a new Macedonian empire, his.

In the meantime emperor Basil II prepared again for war, and in 991 he departed toward Solun. The two Tsars in the next 5 years will fight lengthy strategic battles with swapping luck. But, due to the renewed Arab invasion from the southeast, in 995 emperor Basil II was forced to postpone the direct confrontation with his adversary once again and to withdraw from the Macedonian Peninsula.

The departure of the Romeian emperor with his army was immediately used by Samoil, and with large army he advanced toward Solun. Defense of the city was entrusted to Gregory Taronit, who also had at his disposal a large army. When Tsar Samoil with his troops approached Solun Taronit sent his son Ashot to discover the size of Samoil's army. But Ashot fell into an ambush and was captured. Seeing the mistake he made his father rushed to help him, but he too was surrounded by Samoil's soldiers and was killed.



When Basil II found out about the death of Gregory Taronit ordered the famed military commander of eastern forces Nikifor Uranus to intervene in Macedonia. In front of the

considerably larger Romeian army advance Tsar Samoil retreated from Solun toward Thessalia, and further to Peloponnesus, but Nikiphor followed him without a break. He reached the Macedonians at the river Sperhey, and attacked them by surprise during the night. Samoil and his son Gavril Radomir barely managed to save their own lives. Next, emperor Basil II from the other side ordered his patricius Theodorokian and protospatar Nikifor Xifias in Thrace to simultaneously attack Samoil from northeast. They advanced between the river Danube and Stara Planina (i.e. 'Old Mountain', today *Mt. Balkan*) toward Pliska. Then after Basil II in AD 1001 lead his great army in the new advance, headed again toward Solun, and conquered back surrounding Macedonian strongholds.

Here it must be mentioned his visit to the sanctuary in Solun and his christian prayers for victory adressed to St. Demetrius, the protector of all Macedonians. This gesture exposes again the typical Macedonic ethical phenomena of continuous interdynastic conflicts, as in this case, when the emperor of one Macedonian dynasty, Basil II, a ruler of multiethnic Romeian Empire envokes prayers and fights against another Macedonian ruler, Samoil, and his Macedonian state.

Above: **the territory of Macedonian empire of Tsar Samoil (963-1018) with vassal kingdoms and the directions and dates of military campaigns and main battles**

Next year Basil made bold move toward north, deep into the Tsar Samoil's empire, and reached as far as the city of Vidin on the Danube shores. Samoil didn't came in help of the city, and after 8 months of siege the fortress fell to the Romeians. Here Basil II succeded to exert political pressure on the Banat prince Ajtony to break-up the Hungaro-Macedonian alliance. This caused a severe reaction on the Macedonian ruller's court, and disolution of the marital and political alliance with the Kingdom of Hungary. The Hungarian princess was expelled from Ohrid, despite the fact that she was pregnant by Gavril Radomir, son and successor of Tsar Samoil.

After this great military and political victory in AD 1004 Basil II toke Skopje too. But his re-conquest was stopped at Pernik, where he failed to retake this strong Macedonian fortress, after which he returned back to Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Thus, the war between the two emperors entered the third decade. In these four years Basil II made numerous incursions into Macedonian territory, with more or less success, but until 1014 he failed to defeat Samoil.

Then happened the last battle on Mt. Belasitsa. On 29 of July 1014 Tsar Samoil was finally defeated by Basil II Porphyrogenitus, and the main bulk of his army was – attention – not destroyed, but captured. Thanks to his son Gavril Radomir bravery Samoil

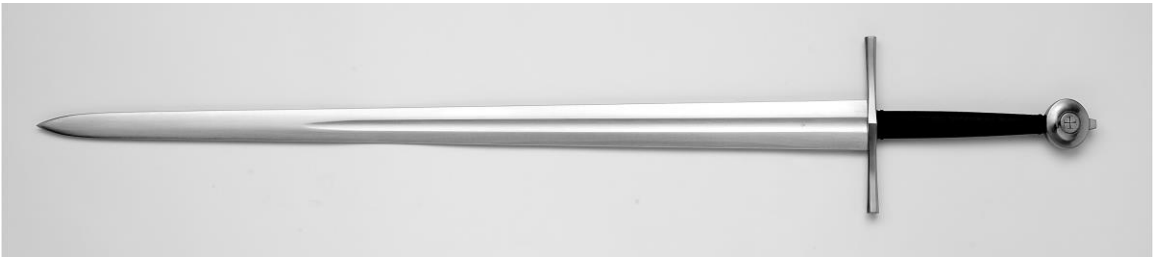
was saved, and they escaped back to the city of Prilep.

After the great victory at Mt. Belasitsa emperor Basil II demonstrated, for today standards unusually cruel and inhuman behavior toward the prisoners of war. In today perspective there's no rational explanation nor excuse for the cruelty of this act on the side of the Romeian emperor – he ordered all the prisoners to be blinded, and only one eye to be left to every 100th prisoner, so it can lead their blind comrades back to their tsar in Prilep. However macabre this might be, there's an explanation for this cruelty. Namely, on the Constantinople imperial court the relatives-rival pretenders on the throne were used to be blinded, not because to punish severely their disobedience, but because it was considered very great sin for the emperor to kill his own kin or royal relatives. So, they were blinded, or if lucky, sent to isolation in some distant monastery as monks. This

fact underlines their common (or partly shared) Macedonic origin of both armies and emperors, the one of Basil II and that of Samoil, or even the possible close kin relationship (?) between the two emperors. Thus, the emperor Basil II wasn't actually nicknamed "Vulgarochtonos" (Βουλγαροκτόνος) i.e. 'the Bulgar Slayer' for blinding the soldiers of Samoil, but because of killing the Turkic Bulgars in his more northeastern military campaigns in Bulgar lands.[36] Even less known fact is that the appellation "Vulgarochtonos" was introduced by western transcribers more than two centuries after his death.

Nevertheless, on the sight of his blind army Tsar Samoil had a heart attack of which he couldn't recover, and finally he died few months later, on 6 October 1014. The death of Samoil after the Battle of Belasitsa is represented in a miniature of the 14th century, with Macedonic translation in the illustrated chronicle by Konstatntin Manassiah, known as a "*Manassiah Chronicle*". The miniature indicates that when Tsar Samoil saw his blinded soldiers he consequently died of heart stroke. The foreground is represented by fortress tower, and before it a senior courtier who receives and comforts blinded soldiers. The soldiers are in blue clothes and red hats on their heads. On the opposite side is represented lesser quadrangular tower with a pyramid on top. Before it is represented emperor Basil II Porphyrogenitus as sitting on a throne and giving orders to blind the soldiers and sent them to Samoil. Between the two towers are seen mountains that symbolize the space from Mt. Belasica to the city of Prilep.

Historical records, however, tell us that Basil II finds out of the death of Samoil on October 24, 1014, in Mosinipol, when a new Macedonian ruler, Gavril Radomir, have already inherited the throne and the right to rule over the Macedonian empire. And he, as expected, didn't give up on his father's kingdom and the Macedonian people. Thus, the death of Tsar Samoil did not meant immediate disintegration of his empire. His successors to the throne continued the war with Romeians and raided as far as Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. But, after a serie of dramatic battles, devastating campaigns and acts of treason throughout Samoil's empire, the last faithful commanders of Samoil, Ivec and Nikolica were defeated in the summer of AD 1018, and Ohrid was taken.



[36] The restoration of the Danubian frontier helped establish a more stable and secure border for the Romeian empire in Europe, maintaining a stronger frontier against the raids of the countryside and towns by the Bulgars, Hungars, and Pechenegs.

Basil II Porphyrogenitus then acted fast and lowered again the Patriarchy status of Ohrid back to Archiepiscopacy/Archbishopry, but, he left its autochthonous status intact, and the new archbishop John Bigorski took over the holy see in Ohrid in 1020. The reading of sigillia issued by Basil reveal that he was confirming the continuation of the church organization established by Samoil, while retaining its autocephalous status in relation to Constantinople. Basil even strove to create an impression that sigillia were actually issued at patriarch John's own request, who continued to head now the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. His reference to Samoil at the end of the first sigillia noted that the Ohrid Patriarchate/Archiepiscopacy actually retains for the clergy the same economic privileges given by Samoil. From the context "*all those kleroikoi are to be exempt from oikomodion and other eporoi for they were free at the time of Samoil*", Basil II indirectly recognized that the Patriarchate/Archbishopric in Ohrid was in deed established by Samoil. But, of the Church that the emperor was now incorporating in the Romeian Empire. However, it is also noticeable that Basil carefully avoided any reference of Samoil's formal title and position within the state that he had conquered. It is quite easy to understand the reasons for this disrespect, since as far as we know, Samoil didn't ask for the legitimization and recognition of his title and church from Constantinople, nor it was offered to him by the Romeian political and ecclesiastical establishment. There is also no mention of any imperial regalia or military spoils displayed during the procession of victory back in Constantinople. The reason is again same – despite of Samoil being a former 'domestikoi' of the Romeian empire, his regalia were not granted to him by the Romeian emperor or church, and thus were considered illegitimate. The military spoils were symbolically left in Samoil's heartland in southwestern Macedonia, with his Ohrid fortress razed to the ground and left in ruins as a reminder of Basil's victory.

This imperial and ideological image concerning the conquest of the Samoil's State was completely different from John Tzimiskes' (969-976) triumphal celebration of the victory over the Bulgars in 971, where the act of official dethroning took place. We may easily find the reasons for the different labeling having in mind that Peter's title emanated from the legitimacy obtained from the Romeian emperors, who had also the right to abolish it, as Tzimiskes triumphantly did in 971. That is why Peter was carefully chosen, not Simeon or other rulers of the former Bulgar state, nor the dethroned Boris II. Tsar Samoil on the other hand acted completely independently from the Romeian emperor and did not request nor obtain any legitimacy from Constantinople.[37] These facts underline once again the Macedonian kin relations between Basil II and Samoil.

But, Ohrid Archiepiscopacy autocephalous status confirmed by Basil II was not based on non-canonical acts, like the one of Romanos I, but emanated from the rights given by Justinian I the Great. With the addition of Justiniana Prima older traditions to Samoil's church, Romeian ecclesiastical establishment from the end of 11th and beginning of 12th century was engaged in providing additional arguments for acquiring the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy – Justiniana Prima and its traditions, using as a basis the ideological construct of Basil II that imposed leading ecclesiastical identity of the Samoil's Church – Ohrid Archbishopric.[38]

[37] Mitko B. Panov, "The Ohrid Archbishopric and the Ecclesiastical Identity in Byzantium".
[38] Ib idem.

So, after 40 years of almost incessant war the Romeian emperor of Macedonian ancestry Basil II succeeded in reconquesting the previous possessions of the empire from his Macedonian rival Samoil. His reign was considered an era of relative prosperity for the agricultural class as well, despite the almost constant wars. The Romeian army would be substantially grown during his reign, especially with the help of land reforms. This would help Basil II keep the loyalty of his army in his campaigns, a force that approximately reached the manpower of 110,000 soldiers, which is a size that had not been seen since the late days of Justinian I the Great.

Historian E. R. A. Sewter translates and describes his empire from the biographies made by Psellus, who was alive during the reign of Basil II, as the following: "*He crushed rebellions, subdued the feudal landowners, conquered the enemies of the Empire, notably in the Danubian provinces and the East. Everywhere the might of Romeian arms was respected and feared. The treasury was overflowing with the accumulated plunder of Basil's campaigns. Even the lamp of learning, despite the emperor's known indifference, was burning still, if somewhat dimly. The lot of ordinary folk in Constantinople must have been pleasant enough. For most of them life was gay and colorful, and if the city's defensive fortifications were at some points in disrepair they had no cause to dread attacks*". According to Psellus, Basil II sought to decrease the power and wealth of the nobility and the church, and so increased their taxes, which made him unpopular with them. Psellus ascribes Basil's radical change from a dissolute youth who had been a womanizer to a grim autocrat devoted to the duties of state to the circumstances of the rebellions of Vardas Skleros and Vardas Phokas. They challenged his throne, and even got close to depose him. This is also supported by the discipline and organization of the army during his reign, becoming an efficient fighting force. Modern historian John Julius Norwich quotes: "*Success for Basil depended on faultless organization. The army must act as a single, perfectly coordinated body. When battle began, he forbade any soldier to break ranks. Heroics were punished with instant dismissal. His men complained about their master's endless inspections; but they gave him their trust because they knew that he never undertook an operation until he was certain of victory.*"

Above: **artistic image of the emperor Basil II Porphyrogenitus**[39]

[39] At his time, the period of Macedonian Renaissance* was taking affect, seeing the rise of classical scholarship, being assimilated into Christian artwork, and the study of ancient philosophy.
* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedonian_Renaissance

The war between the Romeians and Macedonians, by all means, can be clasified as Macedonian Civil War, as the regions most favored for recruiting soldiers for Romeian army, apart from the immediate neighborhood around Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, were in Macedonia and Armenia (yet another Macedonic region par excellence). These troops were called ‘domestic’ (*Domestikoi* in Septuagint Koine), and were the most reliable and elite units of the whole Romeian army. Identified chiefly by their province of origin, Macedonians, Paphlagonians, Armenians, and so forth - they were brigaded in the “Western” (Macedonian Peninsula proper) and “Eastern” (Asia Minor) divisions. The *Domestikoi* from central Macedonia were also known as *Vardariotai*, associated with the Macedonian region around Solun (Latin: *Thessaloniki*) and along the river Vardar in Macedonian inland.

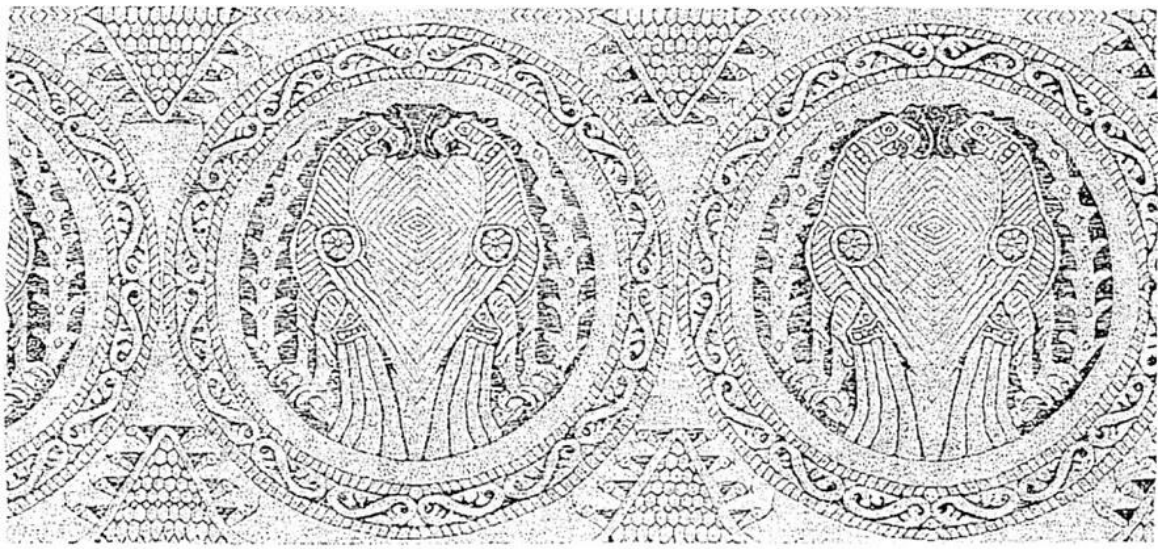
Above: **left - the type of shields of the *Comes Domesticorum* (homeland troops) in the West (Macedonia), and right - the shields of the *Comes Domesticorum* in the East (Asia Minor), as described in *Notitiae Dignitatum***

On the next page: **artistic ilustrations of the medieval warriors and kings**

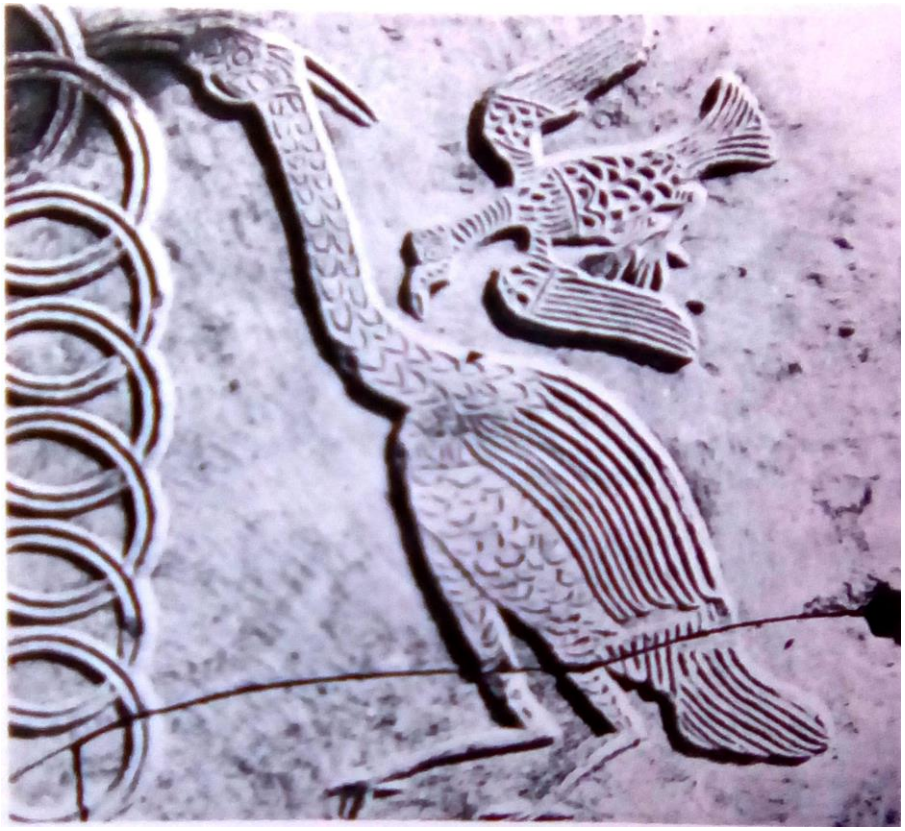
TSAR SAMOIL'S TOMB

Tsar Samoil was buried in his first capital, in the cathedral of St. Ahill on the homonymous island in the lake Small Prespa. This was one of his two capitals and holy sees in the centre of Macedonia.

Archaeological research under the guidance of Professor N. Micopulos from the Solun University, which began in 1966, beside the southern wall of the church of St. Achilles discovered his grave which was covered with a marble slab with crosses and other royal symbols a sarcophagus with a two-headed hawk. In the sarcophagus was discovered the skeleton of a man about 70 years with fractures of the left arm. Noble deceased elder was buried in ceremonial clothes embroidered with silver double-headed hawk, and wore breast-armor woven by copper wire, covered with small metal plates.



Skeleton hand over the left elbow had a fracture that has been deformed. Burial findings suggest that the deceased belonged to a high social class, and the fractured left hand is allegedly confirmation of Samoil's wound received in the Battle of Sperhej. However, so far "*the only confirmation of the theory that perhaps this are really the remains of Samoil, is the historian Michael Atalijat, who claims that Samoil died on the island in Prespa*," said prof. Dr. Milan Boškovski.



Above: **details from the marble sarcophagus in the church of St. Ahil**

TSAR SAMOIL LEGACY AND TRADITIONS

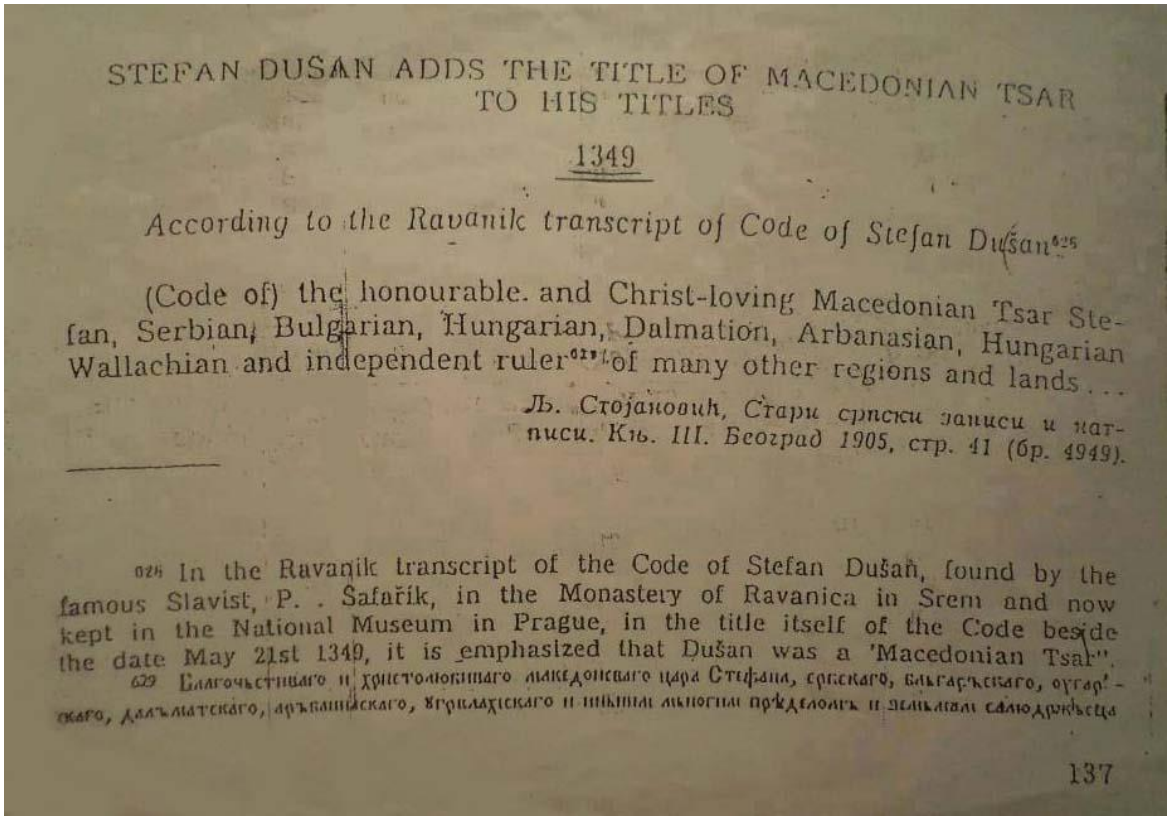
More then thousand years after Tsar Samoil is firmly into the collective memory of Macedonian nation. According to Macedonian history, Tsar Samoil was a person of high political, diplomatic and military virtues, king, ruler, national leader and general, worthy of the reputation and power of the Romeian Emperor Basil II. He was considered "*invincible in power and unsurpassable in strength*". Similar comments were made even by Romeians in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, where John Kyriotes wrote a poem offering a punning comparison between the Macedonian Emperor and Halley's comet, which appeared in 989.

John Skylitzes, a Romeian historian of the 11th century, writes for him that he was belligerent man who couldn't calm, and for John the Geometer, Constantinople poet of 10th century – "*Samoil compares with comet and terrible wind that burns everything in front*."

Romeian author Kekavmen attaches him characteristics of a military genius, and says that the battle at Belasica occurred at the time when they were ruled by "*brilliant military leader Samoil*." According to the Chronicle of the Priest Dukljanin, during the rule of Samoil, "*Romeians didn't dare to come closer to Macedonia*," and according to the Life of St. Nikon Metanoit, however, Samoil was "*the invincible force and power compelling*."

In the chronicle of John Zonaras, Tsar Samoil is Macedonian people leader and tribune. Moreover, the legal state descended from the time of Tsar Samoil was reclaimed again from the leaders of the following Macedonian uprisings against Eastern-Roman rule - Peter Deljan and Georgi Voyteh, and later by the Macedonian people, which constantly remembered him in their songs and stories.

Even the new upstart from the north, the Rascian king Stefan Dushan, in 1299 claimed his crown, by presenting himself as the heir of Samoil's dynasty through supposed relation with Jovan Vladimir, who married Samoil's daughter, and finally crowned himself as Macedonian Tsar in the city of Skopje. Felix Pentatius in his "Historia Turcica" from 1502 confirms the obtained Macedonian title of Stefan Dushan as "Stephanus Macedonum Rasianorum Caesar"; as well as Edith Durham, who writing about the 1349 transcription of the Canon of Tsar Stefan Dushan says: "*The celebrated Canon of Tsar Stefan Dushan throws light on the means employed to crush the conquered, when Great Servia was at its greatest. - "Tsar Dushan, the Macedonian, Autocrat of Servia, Vulgaria, Hungary, Wallachia, and other countries ... Laws established by the grace of God in the year 1349 at a meeting of the Patriarchs"*."



STEFAN DUŠAN ADDS THE TITLE OF MACEDONIAN TSAR TO HIS TITLES

1349

According to the Ravanik transcript of Code of Stefan Dušan[625]

(Code of) the honourable and Christ-loving Macedonian Tsar Stefan, Serbian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Dalmation, Arbanasian, Hungarian Wallachian and independent ruler[627] of many other regions and lands . . .

Љ. Стојановић, Стари српски записи и натписи. Књ. III. Београд 1905, стр. 41 (бр. 4949).

[626] In the Ravanik transcript of the Code of Stefan Dušan, found by the famous Slavist, P. . Šafařík, in the Monastery of Ravanica in Srem and now kept in the National Museum in Prague, in the title itself of the Code beside the date May 21st 1349, it is emphasized that Dušan was a 'Macedonian Tsar".

[627] Благочестивиаго и христољубивиаго македонскаго цара Стефана, српскаго, блъгарскаго, оугар-скаго, далъматскаго, арбанашскаго, хрисаахискаго и инъкыми многыми прѣдѣлолъ и земльлами самодрѣьца

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Macedonian insurgents since the beginning of the last century, along with Alexander III of Macedon, always invoked the glory of Tsar Samoil. For example, on July 24 (new style) 1901 (at Ivanden), when the Ohrid Komitadji Company was founded, and on the ceremony on this occasion Atanas Keckarov writes: "*The abbot of the monastery, Atanas Temjanov, wearing his most precious clerical robe, consecrated and blessed the resurected Tsar Samoil's army*."

19th century Ohrid voivoda[40] Hristo Uzunov in his correspondence used the pseudonym 'Samoil', and Krste Petkov Misirkov wrote that the Macedonians had "*strong Macedonian state as from Tsar Samoil and rich folk literataure*".

Even on the First Session of the ASNOM in Prohor Pčinski monastery "(August 2, 1944) in few documents is stressed that "*the Macedonian state is a continuation of the medieval state of Tsar Samoil as historical heritage of the Macedonian people*."

Next page: **the monument of Tsar Samoil in the downtown of Skopje, Republic of Macedonia**

[40] Macedonian military '*warlord*'.

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